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OR, BLOCKING THE FIFTH AVENUE SPORT.

BY GEORGE C. JENKS,
AUTHOR OF "THE HAYSEED DETECTIVE," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

FURY, THE BLACK MARE.

THE scene is the stables at the Brighton Beach race track.

It is the early spring time, and the salt breezes of old ocean sweep across the turf, and set the grass to waving where it is long enough,

RODNEY LEANED FORWARD IN HIS SADDLE AND CUT THE GIRTHS CLEAN THROUGH.

and cause it to crouch closer to the earth where it is not.

The sun is just coming up over the straight line of blue in the distance, and the early morning air is sharp.

"Blow me tight if this 'ere cussed country ain't always cold," exclaimed a short, thickset man, in a full suit of corduroy, with a cap of the same material pulled over his little gray eyes.

His trousers were tight, his coat was buttoned around him tightly, and his neck was tightly swathed in a thick handkerchief of blue with large red spots. In his tight mouth, shaded by a tight little mustache, he held a straw, and his hands were so tightly jammed into his trousers pockets that they seemed to have grown there.

He was trotting up and down in front of a stable door that was locked, but with the key sticking in the keyhole, and was looking toward the gate of the track, as if he expected some one to come, and did not care to go into the stable until he did.

"Gorby me!" he muttered; "I'll git out of this 'ere blarsted country. That's wot I'll do. There ain't no fun in it, and I'm a welcher if there's much money in it, neither. Wot does that there cove mean by keepin' me 'ere a waitin' for 'im, on a cold mornin' like this 'ere? I'll tell 'im so, too, when he does come."

He looked very big and determined as he said this, and he bit off an inch or two of the straw in his mouth with a champ like the snap of a patent lock. But, at that moment, some one appeared at the open gate of the track, and the short man's demeanor changed at once to one of marked humility.

The newcomer was large and heavy, with a square jaw, dark eyes, and a heavy, dark-brown mustache, shadowing his closely-set mouth. He wore a long overcoat buttoned tight across his generous figure, and a shiny silk hat was set squarely over his broad forehead.

He walked across the turf toward the stables with the firm tread of a man who believed in himself, and was not to be daunted, bluffed, or backed down when once his mind was made up.

"Well, Rod, you're here, I see," he said, in a cold, matter-of-fact tone, which was the only acknowledgment he vouchsafed to the respectful bow of the other.

"Yes, Mr. Stroker. B'in 'ere nigh on ter two hours."

"That's right. I like people around me to be punctual."

Mr. Stroker turned the key, and went into the stable, closing the door after him.

"'E ain't the most agreeable party in the world," muttered the short man, as he stood irresolutely outside the door, uncertain what to do. "But 'e pays for what 'e 'as done, an' Jim Rodney ain't got no kick comin'. I guess 'e's like all them politicians. There ain't none on 'em very nice 'cept jist afore 'lection, an' then butter would not melt in their mouths—no, nor yet sugar."

These audible reflections evidently relieved the mind of Jim Rodney, for he took another bite of the straw, and appeared to relish it exceedingly.

There was a loud noise in the stable, as if some one were trying to beat down the stable, that made Jim Rodney turn quickly toward the door.

"The mare's showin' off ag'in. Well, I guess Mr. Stroker can stand it. But that there little mare 'as got the deuce in 'er, if ever a 'orse 'ad."

The noise in the stable increased, and Stroker's voice could be heard remonstrating:

"Whoa, mare! Easy, Fury! Easy!"

"Yes, she'll be easy. I don't think. That there's a good name for 'er. Fury! She's a fury, if ever I seed one. Bli' me, if I don't think she's a kickin' Mr. Stroker's brains out."

The door of the stable was closed, and Jim Rodney could not see what was going on inside, but there could be no doubt that the man who was shut in with the mare was having a lively time.

Bang! Crash! Bang!

The snorting of the animal could be plainly heard, mingled with the now breathless accents of Stroker.

"Easy! Easy! Fury! Poor old girl! Come, come, mare!"

"Bli' me, if I don't think she is a comin' more'n 'e wants!" commented Rodney, as he chewed his straw with a convulsive haste that betokened his strong interest in the unseen proceedings within.

There were two or three more bangs that made the stable fairly quiver; then Rodney, evidently overcoming some feeling of doubt as to whether it would be safe for him to take a hand in the trouble, seized the handle of the door and pulled it wide open.

The next instant he was turning a double somerset on the greensward, a black horse, with mane and tail flying in the wind, leaped over his prostrate body and dashed across the paddock toward the open gate on the other side.

"You cursed meddling fool! See what you've done!" roared Stroker, as he appeared in the doorway, still in his overcoat, with a short, stout riding whip in his hand, of the description known as a "crop," with a heavy silver knob on one end, and a thong of leather on the other.

Jim Rodney sat up and looked about him in a bewildered manner. He was not quite sure whether or not the mare had kicked his brains out.

Stroker did not care anything about the Englishman's brains, but, with the crop gripped viciously in his powerful hand, he was running across the paddock, in the hope of heading off the mare before she could get out of the gate.

Fury saw him coming, and, in a spirit of perversity peculiar to horses in their moments of skittishness, she came for him, head down.

"Look out, Mr. Stroker! She's a goin' ter butt yer!" howled Rodney, as he sprang to his feet and rushed toward the mare to take a hand in the fun.

"Shut your mouth!" was the big man's gracious response, as he waited for the onslaught of the mare.

Although broad-shouldered and heavy, Simon Stroker proved that he was as agile as a lad of seventeen, for, as the mare leaped viciously at him, he stepped aside easily and gracefully, yet deftly seized the long halter that trailed from her, and swung her around so suddenly that she almost dropped to her knees.

Before she could recover herself, he had shortened his hold on the halter, and was patting her nose.

"Now, Rod, get ready to give her a spin. I'll walk her up and down for a few minutes to let her cool off. I don't suppose this performance of hers has hurt her much, although it might have ruined her, and I've had enough bad luck with my stable this last few months without losing Fury too!"

Stroker looked anxiously into the eyes of the mare, and felt her coat with his hand as he walked her slowly toward the stable.

"Give her a rub down, and put a blanket on her, Rod," he commanded, briefly, as he reached the stable and led her inside.

Jim Rodney went inside the stable, and in a few minutes had passed a dry cloth all over her, with a brisk movement, so that the black coat was as glossy as velvet. Then he strapped a blanket around her and led her to the door.

The scent of the morning air was too much for Fury. Before Stroker could take the halter in his hand she had made another dash for liberty, and was within a few yards of the outer gate before Stroker had time to even swear.

"Curse you, Rodney! Why didn't you hold her till I got her?" he demanded, savagely.

"Ow could I?" exclaimed the Englishman, in aggrieved tones. "She was gone afore I knew it."

But Stroker had scurried across the paddock after the mare, and did not hear the remarks.

In spite of his heavy overcoat and his own avoirdupois, Stroker made such good time that he was at the gate just before the mare, and there was a slight smile around his grim mouth as he sprang for the halter.

But Fury had her own ideas about the

matter, and as Stroker reached for the halter she tossed up her head, and he missed the rope, while Rodney emitted an irreverent chuckle that made Stroker glance around in anger.

That glance around might have cost him his life, for his foot slipped on the damp grass, and, before he could recover himself, he had fallen headlong to the ground.

Fury was curvetting around him, and as he fell she came forward to gain liberty outside the gate.

With a neigh of triumph she raised herself on her hind legs and pawed the air, preparatory to coming down with her fore feet.

Stroker was a brave man, but as he saw the beast above him, and realized that her feet must come down exactly on his head, he gave a cry of horror that might be wrung from even a hero.

Rodney saw the situation, and stopped short in his run across, as if frozen to the ground.

It was an awful moment for the prostrate man.

The mare poised herself for an instant, and then dropped her feet with a crash!

CHAPTER II.

THE WILL.

On the tenth floor of one of the great sky-scraping office buildings on lower Broadway, New York, in the afternoon of the day on which the mare, Fury, is introduced to the reader, three people are sitting in the private room of Emil Lenz, senior partner of the law firm of Lenz, Bach & Lenz.

They are Mr. Emil Lenz himself, an elderly, sharp-visaged man, with black eyes so keen that they seem almost to pierce the glasses of his gold-rimmed spectacles; a young girl, richly, but demurely dressed, and a tall, thin man of about forty, with a long, sallow face, clean-shaven, and a sanctimonious expression. He was dressed in black clothes of good material, but old-fashioned cut, and his collar and necktie were both white, giving him the appearance of a preacher of ascetic tendencies, while his broad-brimmed, stiff hat proclaimed him a Quaker. His manner of speech verified this suggestion.

"Friend Lenz, I hope thee has not brought Sister Ruth and me here without good reason."

"Sister" Ruth was about sixteen years of age, with dancing brown eyes, and pink and white cheeks that were the picture of health. Her wavy brown hair showing beneath her prim little hat was glossy, and seemed to change its shades of brown in the electric lights that were burning in the room, and her vivacious manner was in delightful contrast to the stiff formality of the man she called uncle.

Emil Lenz shrugged his shoulders impatiently, and pulled from his pocket a bundle of official-looking papers with a snap.

"Mathew Slater, you have been the guardian of your niece, Ruth Slater, for ten years," observed Lenz, in cold, dry tones, as he glanced over one of the papers he had unfolded.

"Verily, yes, Friend Lenz. Thee knows that."

"If you wouldn't interrupt, Mr. Slater, we'd get through quicker, and I have to be in court at three o'clock."

The lawyer looked at a little clock ticking away inside his rolltop desk, and continued:

"William Slater died ten years ago, and left his only daughter, Ruth, in the custody of his brother, Mathew Slater, until his will should be read, on the 4th of May, 1894. The will was left in my hands, and this is the 4th of May, 1894. Here is the will."

"Verily, Friend Lenz, we fain would know what is in it."

The lawyer did not answer, but, stepping to the door that led to the outer office, he tried the lock to make sure that it was fastened, and then unfolded a document of heavy paper, that was among the bundle he held in his hand.

Mathew Slater composed himself to listen with the deepest attention, but Ruth sat close to the window, and looked down

at the moving panorama of New York's busiest life in the busiest thoroughfare, at the busiest time of the day, as if the will had little concern for her.

"This will gives to Ruth Slater the house on Fifth Avenue, now occupied by Mathew Slater, with all the furniture and bric-a-brac in it that belonged to the testator."

The lawyer said this dryly, and Mathew Slater gulped down something that seemed to be rising in his throat.

"Verily, it will turn me into the street, Friend Lenz," he observed, huskily.

"That depends upon Miss Ruth," answered the lawyer, as he looked over the will again and continued: "In addition to this house and furniture, Ruth Slater is to receive the stocks, bonds, and securities in my hands, valued at about \$500,000, and the sum of \$100,000 in cash, in the Fidelity Safe Deposit vaults, in New York, in the possession of Mathew Slater."

Mathew Slater opened his mouth like a fish out of water, and a peculiar sound came from it, like a sigh half-turned into a cough.

"There is nothing to be done now but to turn over the \$100,000 to Miss Ruth forthwith," remarked Mr. Lenz, as he looked up carelessly.

"That will be done in due season, Friend Lenz. Of course I am the executor."

"Of course you are not, Mr. Slater," responded the lawyer, as he glanced over the will, which was still in his hand.

Again Mathew Slater was surprised, and asked, with forced calmness: "Who is?"

"I am," returned the lawyer, sententiously. "And now, if you are ready, we will run down to the Fidelity and get the money right away."

"Oh, there's Mame Hilton," exclaimed Ruth, suddenly, as she pressed her pretty face against the window pane in her endeavor to see better. "She is going down to her papa's office in Wall Street, I guess. I will just step into the elevator, and you can follow when you are ready."

Before another word could be said, she had unlocked the door and was out in the hall.

Mathew Slater stood at the door of the offices of Lenz, Bach & Lenz, watching Emil Lenz, who had stepped into the hall to speak to a friend. Mr. Lenz held the will tightly clasped in his hand, and there could be no mistaking the wistful look cast upon it by the sanctimonious Mathew.

"That cursed will is a thunderbolt!" hissed Mathew, under his breath, and if his words could have been heard it would have been noticed that there was no Quaker mannerism in his speech now.

He looked around the offices of the firm, and saw that the three rooms were empty. The set of offices consisted of one rather large apartment, out of which opened two others, each half as large as the big one. That in the front was the private room of Mr. Emil Lenz, and his two partners used the back one indiscriminately, as they happened to require it. The large public room was the abiding place of two office boys, just beginning to think they were nearly men, but who were over in the Criminal Court this afternoon.

All the doors of the rooms were open, and Mathew looked hastily into the back private office, and then into the front room, in which the cover of the rolltop desk of Emil Lenz was still down, as he had left it a few moments before.

As Mr. Lenz returned, and looked sharply at him, Mathew was deeply interested in the street as seen from the window.

"Are you ready, Mr. Slater?" asked the lawyer, as he folded the will. "We may as well go down to the Fidelity, and you can turn over the money to me as the executor, so that I can hand it to Miss Ruth in your presence."

Then the outer door of the office was closed, and what else was said or done was a matter of conjecture.

There was silence for a minute, perhaps. Then a stifled shriek, and the sound of a falling chair, followed by a dull, muffled jar in the offices of Lenz, Bach & Lenz.

CHAPTER III.

THE MURDER.

The echoes of the shriek and the falling chair had hardly died away when Ruth Slater stepped out of the elevator on the tenth floor.

She stood in the hall for a moment, looking about her, and wondering whether the walls and ceilings were fire-proof, as she had been told. She waited irresolutely at the glass door on which were the names, Lenz, Bach & Lenz, and wondered whether her uncle and Mr. Lenz were inside. It struck her that they might have gone down in the other elevator, and passed her on her way up.

Up came her elevator again, and she asked the elevator man whether Mr. Lenz and another gentleman had gone down.

"No; I guess Mr. Lenz is still in his office," he replied. "But here is one of his young men."

He glanced back into the recesses of his elevator, as he spoke.

"Betcher life!" broke in a shrill voice. "You hit it there, cull. I'm his young man, an' you kin bet I'm a dandy!"

Ruth couldn't tell who was speaking, but the same voice continued, with additional shrillness:

"Now, sinners, take er skate! What's d'e matter wid yer? Y'er feet nailed ter d'e floor, or is there paralytics in y'er knee joints? I want ter git out of this here old box. See?"

There was a commotion in the elevator, and a youth of about nineteen, but not taller than one of fourteen, elbowed his way out, and, as he saw Ruth, removed his Derby hat with a flourish.

"I didn't know as there was a dame here or I wouldn't have been so brash," he explained. "But dese yer ducks make me tired, stickin' in de way when a gentleman has business."

The elevator went up, and he walked straight toward the door of the offices of Lenz, Bach & Lenz.

As he did so, Ruth saw that he wore a sack coat, cut "saucy," and that his trousers were striped formidably, and had a crease down the front that would cut a slice of bread.

"Holy murderin' suckotash!" he yelled, as he opened the door, and sprang back, with an expression on his sharp features that betokened horror in every lineament.

At the same instant Ruth uttered a scream that resounded through the great building and brought two or three of the spruce clerks to the door in an instant.

Emil Lenz lay stretched across the floor of the main office, dead.

In the midst of the chorus of exclamations, a tall young man, with brawny limbs, great hands, and a drooping brown mustache as his most noticeable personal characteristics, broke through the crowd and raised the head of the dead lawyer.

"Phwat are yer all standin' around looking at him fer? Howly saints! Can't yer see he is murdered, an' that the mon phwat murdered him can't be far away? Be the powers, it's meself ez hez a roight ter arrist the whole on yer, so Oi hov', be token that Oi hov' never had the power taken from me since Oi wuz on the foorce. Git a docthor, som' uv yez."

"Come off d'e ice, Pat McGlone! Don't yer see he's clean croaked?" put in the little clerk in the "saucy" coat. "What's de good of a pill pounder now, 'cept to make him deader?"

"Hello, is it ye'self thot's here, Snap?"

"Oh, take a sneeze! Where would I be? Ain't I de confidential clerk of d'e firm? I takes charge now d'e main guy has gone, an' don't you forgit it."

A "hurry" call for an ambulance had already been sent in, and the spruce young men, having satisfied their first burst of curiosity, had dropped away one by one almost as soon as they saw that Emil Lenz was dead.

The tragedy was a strange one, but there are so many violent deaths in New York, that even this one, taking off, as it did, a prominent lawyer, could not be al-

lowed to stem the tide of business just before bank closing hour.

Pat McGlone laid the head of the corpse reverently on the carpet again, and, with the young man called Snap, but whose full name was Edward Snipper, made a careful search of the apartments.

Everything was just as it was before Snipper went out, he said, except that there was a chair turned over by the side of the dead man, indicating that he had been standing against it, or perhaps sitting in it when he was killed.

Ruth, shrinking into herself, as it were, was standing in the hallway, looking into the room, and wondering, vaguely, where her uncle could be.

There was a bustle at the elevator, and then two tall policemen from the Church Street police station, accompanied by the ambulance surgeon, came to the room.

As usual, the policemen showed a disposition to arrest every one on the floor on suspicion, in the hope that they might have the right person, accidentally. But they soon found that the old man had been alone, so far as was known, when he died, and certainly the people present could not have had any hand in the murder.

The ambulance surgeon, a young man, who wore a worried look, bent over the corpse, opened his shirt and felt over his heart, looked in his face, and pronounced him quite dead.

"But phwat killed him?" asked Pat McGlone. "Sure, Oi don't see no marruks on him, so Oi don't."

The surgeon pointed to a spot at the back of the neck—blue in the middle, with a slight inflammation around it, and said, quietly:

"Some sharp instrument was forced through the neck, touched the spinal nerve, and settled the business. It must have been done by a surgeon, or some one that knows all about the human anatomy."

Then the ambulance surgeon arose to his feet and departed to the elevator.

"Begorra, that beats my game, so it does," observed Pat, pulling his drooping mustache.

"Give me all your names," commanded one of the policemen, with official sternness.

He took the names of Pat McGlone, who said he was a waiter in a Bowery restaurant, but had been a policeman; of Edward Snipper, who was a clerk in the office of Lenz, Bach & Lenz, and of Ruth Slater, who lived on Fifth Avenue, with her uncle, Mathew Slater.

Ruth had just given this information, when a hand was laid upon her arm, and turning quickly, she saw her uncle, who had just come from the elevator.

"What's the matter, Ruth?" he asked, hoarsely, as he wiped the perspiration from his white face. "I have been looking for you on Broadway. Then I heard there was some trouble up here, and I hurried to the building, and came up as soon as the elevator could bring me."

"Mr. Lenz has been murdered, sir," said one of the policemen.

"Thee don't say so, friend? Why, I was holding converse with him but a short time ago! Verily, this is a terrible world. What does thee think about it? Has thee found the slayer? Has—has—anything—been—been—been—stolen?"

It seemed as if the word "stolen" stuck in Mathew Slater's throat, but he got it out at last.

"We do not know yet," answered the policeman. "The coroner will take charge when he comes. The desk is open, as you see, and we will not allow anything to be touched, of course."

"Thee is quite right, friend. Thee knows thy business. Where are the partners of Mr. Lenz?"

"Mr. Bach is in Chicago, and Mr. Lenz, Jr., the nephew of Mr. Emil Lenz, is in Europe," said Snap.

"Ah! Well, my name is Mathew Slater, and I live at—"

"The same address as this young lady, I believe, sir," put in one of the policemen, referring to his notebook. "I have your name from her."

There was a quick gleam in the fishy eyes of Mathew, but it was gone in an instant, and probably the policeman did not notice it.

"Be me sowl, Mister Shlater didn't seem to loike the idea uv his address being known, Oi'm thinkin'," muttered Pat McGlone, below his breath. "Oho!"

"Hello! I'm er goat if some one hasn't swiped some papers w'ot belonged to de old man!"

The exclamation was made by Snap, as he picked up a rubber band that was lying on the floor near the dead man's right hand.

"Come, Ruth," said Mathew, rather hastily, as he moved toward the door.

"Wait a moment, uncle. Don't you see? That is the band that was around my father's will," exclaimed Ruth, excitedly.

"No, Ruth, I don't see," answered Mathew, testily. "Rubber bands are all alike, so far as I know, and I don't see how you are to tell that that particular band was around certain papers."

"Be gob, Oi'm wondherin' whether he's a Quaker, afther all," was Pat McGlone's muttered comment, as he kept his eyes fixed upon Mathew's face.

Snap was on his knees turning the band over and over in his hand, as if looking for some certain mark upon it. Suddenly he uttered an exclamation of triumph.

"Be chiminy! I t'ought I knew d'at d'ere gum band. Look here! It hez d'e mark on it right where I put it d'e other day, when d'e boss was lookin' it over."

"Come Ruth," urged Mathew.

"No, wait a moment, uncle."

Snap was pointing to a tiny cross in red ink upon the inside of the gum band, which was wide and flat. The cross was so small that it looked like only a spot, but it had been done with a fine pen, and it was distinctly seen to be a cross when examined closely. The band was well used, and it made the cross indistinct, and only to be found by one who knew just where to look for it.

"D'is here band was round d'e will of William Slater, w'ot up and died ten years ago, an' I heerd d'e old man talkin' 'bout it to-day. Now, d'e will is gone, an' de old man is slugged ter death, an' s'elp me if I don't consider my perfes-sional repitation is at stake ter find out d'e bloke w'ot done d'e act!"

The policeman took the gum band from Snap's hand and put it in his pocketbook with the names and addresses of the witnesses; then he stood, with official stolidity, waiting for the coroner, and listening to any observations that might be made.

Snap looked at the open desk, but did not attempt to touch anything. He had been in the office of Lenz, Bach & Lenz for several years, and knew enough about the forms of common law to be aware that only the authorized representatives of the State could examine the property of the murdered man at this time.

The will was gone; of that Snap was sure; and he fully believed it was stolen by the man who had murdered Lenz. Who that man was no one had the least idea.

There might have been some lingering suspicion of Mathew Slater, but for the fact that he had come up the elevator after the body was discovered, and certainly no one had come out of the room after the deed, because as soon as the cry and fall were heard, the door was opened and the dead man was alone.

The policemen had been watching everything closely, and they had their suspicion of a certain lounge in the private office, under which were heaps of books.

There was a bustle at the door, and the coroner, a stout, comfortable-looking man, with a red face, appeared.

In a few words he was placed in possession of the facts so far as they were known; then one of the policemen pointed to the lounge.

"No one came out of the room after the crime?" he asked pleasantly. "Pull that lounge out from the wall."

"It's screwed ter d'e floor," said Snap, shortly.

"Then pull the books away."

The two policemen knelt, and cautiously, for they were inclined to expect a bullet or knife from the fugitive under the lounge; they pulled away a heap of the dusty old law books with one vicious tug.

Then they looked up into the face of the coroner in utter dismay.

No one was under the lounge.

There were no transoms, and no windows save those that looked down to Broadway, and one that faced a shaft at the back to give what little daylight might penetrate there.

As the people stood looking at each other blankly, while Mathew still wiped his face with his handkerchief, they could hear, coming faintly from the street far below, the cries of the news-boys:

"'Ere yer are! Uxty! All 'bout the mysterious murder! Paper? Uxty! Last edition! Uxty! All 'bout the murder!"

"No motive? Is there?" asked the coroner, musingly.

Then Pat McGlone broke out, while he looked straight into the eyes of Mathew Slater:

"Yes, there is, coroner, be gob! There wuz a will, an' the will is stole, an' the man w'ot murdered thot poor ould man is the murderer! Oi'd shtake me loife on it!"

Mathew Slater fairly dragged his niece from the room and into the elevator, while Pat McGlone followed them with his eyes as far as he could see them.

CHAPTER IV.

STROKER DESPERATE.

When Simon Stroker, the race-track sport, lay under the black mare, and saw her rearing above him, he felt that he had probably come to the end of his career.

He thought he could feel the hot breath of the animal on his face, as she looked down at him, and he could even notice the thin plates on the bottoms of her forefeet, and almost count the nails, all in that awful moment.

It was all over in a flash, however.

Down came the mare's feet, pointing straight for his breast, when there was a shout, and the heavy hoofs were turned aside and came upon the turf, grazing him so closely that they actually tore the great diamond from his scarf, and pulled open his vest.

"Say, stranger, thet thar' was a nar-rer escape fer yer! War'n't it? By Christopher! It was an almighty lucky thing fer you thet I happened along."

A slight young fellow of not more than eighteen years of age, with an innocent, boyish face, brown curls clustering over a sunburnt brow, and blue eyes that looked boldly from beneath well-marked eyebrows, was the speaker. He wore a blue sailor shirt, open at the throat, with a loose black silk handkerchief knotted in true nautical fashion under the broad turn-down collar of the flannel shirt. On his head was a soft black hat, with a rather wide brim, which was turned up here and there, as if the wearer liked to change the style of his head-dress simply for the sake of variety.

Such was the Race Course Detective, whose special duty it was to keep his eye on bookmakers and sharpers that hang about the suburban race tracks. His full name was Benjamin Ward, and his mother kept a restaurant on the Bowery, where her head waiter and chief representative was Pat McGlone, with whom the reader has already become acquainted.

Ben was holding the mare by the halter as he spoke, and it was almost wonderful to note how calm the horse became under the soothing influence of the young detective's touch and whispered words of encouragement.

"Now, old gal, stand still right thar', while I help ther boss ter his feet!"

The mare shook her head slightly, but the newcomer let the halter drop from

his hand as he gave his fist to the prostrate Stroker.

"Wal, ef you ain't er dandy. I ain't never seen one, ter let a good little mare like thet thar' get away with yer," continued Ben Ward, smiling good humoredly, as he helped Stroker to his feet.

The big man pulled himself together and looked around for his silk hat.

"Where is my hat?" he grunted.

"Lucky fer you yer hev' a head to put inter it, I'm thinkin', Mr. Stroker," observed Ben. "You should never tease a horse. I've been in Arizony fer nigh on ter two years, afore I settled down with mother in New York, and I tell yer I wouldn't dare ter do anything like thet with a mettlesome horse. As fer one uv them little broncos, I'll be hanged if they wouldn't hev' kicked yer ter death afore yer knew what hit yer. Allers keep a short line on a horse when it's frisky. Thet's a lesson I learned out West when I first went ter a round-up, and I guess I kin rope er horse with ther next man, too."

Stroker was still looking for his hat, that had dropped a long way from the gate, and did not appear to be noticing particularly what the special was saying.

"I don't charge yer nothin' fer thet thar' advice, Mr. Stroker, so yer needn't be afraid ter take it."

"How do you know my name?"

"Oh, I know a good many things."

"You are mighty free, fer a young-ster."

"Yes, this hyar is er free country."

"But it isn't always safe to be too free, is it?"

"It is for me."

This colloquy was conducted in an incisive manner, for neither Ben nor the man was inclined to yield anything to the other, and if Stroker was sharp-tongued, he found the other was fully his equal.

"You say you don't charge me anything for your advice," observed Stroker.

"Thet's what I said."

"But you charge something for saving my life, of course. Well, Simon Stroker is not the man to let any one do him a service for nothing. Here!"

He took out a pocketbook, well stuffed with bills, and, drawing forth a crisp, new hundred-dollar note, looked at it a moment, and seemed to gaze admiringly upon the big "C" which stood forth in all the glory of the black ink upon the green paper. Then, with something almost like a sigh—for your rich man is generally more sensible of the value of money than a poor one—he handed the bill to Ben.

"What's ther dough fer?"

"Why, didn't you do something for me, just now?"

"Oh, saved ye from ther hoofs of ther little mare."

Jim Rodney had arrived by this time with Stroker's hat, and as he handed it to his chief he looked wonderingly at the rescuer.

Simon Stroker took his hat, and brushed it carefully with an expensive white silk handkerchief, as he answered, complacently, like a man who knew he was doing a generous thing:

"Yes. That hundred-dollar bill is for saving my life."

"Sho! It isn't worth it. I've seen lots of good men killed in Arizony for less than a hundred cents."

The race track sport frowned, for he considered the young fellow altogether too impudent, and he turned toward Fury, the mare, as he forced the bill into the detective's hand.

The next instant something light hit the big sport in the face, and, turning quickly, he saw the precious hundred-dollar green-back lying in a crumpled ball at his feet!

Jim Rodney looked as if he thought his master should have struck the presumptuous young man to the earth, but Ben was standing with his hands in his pockets, looking at the terrible sport with a most provoking expression of good humor.

"You're a durned fool!" growled Stroker, as he picked up the money and stuffed it

into his vest pocket, all crumpled as it was.

"Mebbe!"

"What are you doing here? Don't you know this track is private at this time of the day, and that, when the public is admitted at all, it is only by paying for a ticket at the gate and going through the wicket?"

"Wal, thet may be so, squire. But, yer see, it happens thet I'm not 'zactly ther public."

"What do you mean?"

Ben pulled back his sack coat a little and showed the breast of his blue flannel shirt, whereon gleamed the handsome silver badge which proclaimed him to be a special of the New York Police Detective force.

Jim Rodney had been listening to the conversation and looking at the young man with considerable interest. When he heard the young man talk so boldly to Stroker he wondered that his employer did not knock him down. But, when the silver badge was revealed, Rod turned short around and walked quickly away toward the stable.

He did not get far, however.

With a bound, Ben Ward was by his side, and had seized the Cockney by the shoulder with a light, but irresistible grip.

"Hold on, Walter Bounder. Haven't I seen you before?"

"'Ow do I know? D'yer think I keep my bloomin' heyes all 'round my 'ead to watch for ev'ry blowed hidiot as I comes across?"

Rodney looked at Ben over his shoulder, and glanced down at the sinewy hand of the detective on his coat sleeve, as if inclined to throw it off violently.

"Don't yer do it, Wally!" warned the detective, with a smile. "You ought to know ez Ben Ward kin hold his own with you, no matter whar' he may be."

"My bloomin' name is Jim Rodney," growled Rod, surlily.

"Sometimes, eh? And sometimes it is Walter Bounder, when you hold up sailors down at the Battery."

Rod moved hastily, as if he would knock down the taunting young fellow, but he thought better of it, and, taking the halter of the mare, led her toward the stable.

Simon Stroker did not consider that it would be consistent with his dignity to continue the conversation, and he, too, strolled toward the stable, with his eye on the mare.

"So thet's the mare, eh!" muttered the Race Course Detective, as he stood near the gate, looking after Stroker and Rodney. "She's a likely youngster, and if she's handled right she should win anything she tackles. Miss Ruth hez set her mind on ther mare doing good work, this spring, and I am goin' ter see thet ther little beauty gits a squar' show."

He walked slowly toward the stable, and saw Stroker and Rodney take Fury inside.

"Guess I'll see how she looks in her stall, an' whether she takes her feed willingly," he decided.

He had placed his foot on the threshold of the stable, and was about to say something pleasantly to Stroker, when the door was closed violently in his face, and he found himself looking at the blankness of the door, while a chuckle from Rodney told how much he enjoyed the situation.

"Thar's somethin' in ther wind here, and Miss Ruth was right when she told me she needed a friend ter look after thet thar' little mare of her'n. I think Stroker may mean her to win, but yer can't tell, an', anyhow, he's mighty mysterious about it."

The Race Course Detective listened at the door, and heard Stroker giving orders to Rod in gruff tones. Then his ear caught something that made him utter a low whistle. It was in Stroker's voice:

"If she doesn't please me with this morning's spin, I'll hedge as quickly as possible, and we will let the Badger win. I don't propose to take any chance on an untried horse, like this filly. Do you understand, Rod?"

What Rod said Ben could not distinguish, but he had heard enough from Stroker to make him grind his teeth in rage as he muttered:

"So yer mean ter try a spin with Fury and then drop her, do you, Mr. Stroker? Miss Ruth was right, then, and I'll jist block thet thar' game of yours right away!"

He drew from an inside pocket of his blue flannel shirt a piece of folded letter paper, and as he glanced over it the smile around his mouth indicated his perfect satisfaction.

He seized the latch of the stable door to open it, but it was firmly fastened.

Then he rattled the lock with such persistence and vigor that he interrupted the proceedings within, as he could tell by the growling of Stroker, although he could not hear what he said.

Ben had just given the door a particularly hard shake, when it was suddenly flung open, and Stroker appeared, with the crop raised threateningly.

"For a five-dollar bill I would break your skull."

"Thanks! It would be cheap at the price."

Stroker dropped the end of the crop to the ground in sheer surprise at the impudence of the young special, while Ben looked into his face with an imperturbable smile that was simply exasperating.

"What do you want around here, anyhow?" demanded sport Simon.

"I want to come in."

The smile was still playing around the Race Course Detective's lips, and Stroker rapped the end of the crop against the door-sill impatiently while Rodney soothed the mare, who was looking over her shoulder as if disposed to take part in the controversy.

"Well, you will just get out, right now. That's what you will do," retorted Simon. "I offered you something for the service you did me, and you didn't want it. I do not feel bound to give you too much swing even for saving my life, and I want you to get out of the paddock. And, what's more, if I catch you around this stable again, I'll—"

He did not finish the sentence, but swung the crop so fiercely that the heavy silver knob on the end glistened dangerously in the rays of the morning sun.

"You want me to go away, eh?" asked Ben, smilingly.

"This instant."

"And if I don't go?"

"But you will!"

"Oh!" uttered so tauntingly that Stroker stepped back and pulled the door viciously to close it. It didn't close, however, for Detective Ben sprang forward at the same moment, and stopped it with foot and shoulder, coughing dryly as he did it.

"You fool!" yelled the track sport, as he raised his whip.

"Thanks!" answered the special, as he seized the crop dexterously near the hand of Stroker and wrenched it from him. "Don't try to hit me, because it won't pay. I have something to show you."

The detective still held the crop, and the big man saw that his eyes were watching every movement, to be ready for an attack. Ben had held the paper he had taken from his shirt pocket, and now he flipped it open with a shake, and read from it to the astonished Stroker:

"Mr. Simon Stroker:

Dear Sir—I have decided to take personal charge of my filly, Fury, and have appointed Mr. Benjamin Ward to represent me. You will please surrender Fury to him at once upon production of this order.

"RUTH SLATER."

"That is ridiculous!" cried Stroker, as he snatched at the paper, which Ben took care to draw back in time. "It is a forgery. That is shown on its face. Miss Slater could not write a formal document like that. It is some trick of yours, or those that employ you, to obtain possession of this mare. Rod! Rod!"

He shouted to the stableman, but Rodney had all he could do to control Fury, and, besides, he did not care to measure his strength against the young detective again.

"It is not er trick, Mr. Stroker; an' as fer it not bein' writ by Miss Ruth, thet's all right, too. It was done in typewritin' fer her, by Lenz, Bach & Lenz, her law-

yers, and signed by her. Lenz, Bach & Lenz are witnesses to it. See?"

"Cu'ss you! You shall never have the mare from me!" vociferated Stroker, in a transport of rage, as he drew a revolver from his pocket and pointed it straight at the mare's head!

There was a loud report, but the Race Course Detective had struck the weapon upward, and the bullet lodged in the timbers of the ceiling, while the mare, frightened by the noise, danced and kicked so violently that she seemed likely to tear down the stall.

CHAPTER V.

McGLONE TO THE FORE.

It was the night of the day that had been fraught with so much interest for Ruth Slater and the other characters in this drama, and the scene shifts again.

At Coney Island, the great seaside resort for the toiling thousands of New York, is a large collection of booths and stands devoted to the entertainment of visitors.

Vaudeville shows are going on in some, and in others one can buy clams, oysters, peanuts, fruits, have his picture taken, or play at any game of chance or skill that he cares for.

This particular district at Coney Island is known as the "Bowery," and, in fact, many of the denizens of the New York Bowery may be found there during the season when races are going on at Brighton Beach or at others of the neighboring race tracks. After the races there is a desire for amusement, and it can be found in the Coney Island Bowery, if one is not too particular about refinement.

In one of the sheds devoted to variety shows and to dancing, there was a large crowd. On the stage a young woman was singing a serio-comic song, to the effect that "Sailor Jack is my boy, and he's on the deep blue sea."

She wore a gay-colored short dress, and her hair was yellow and hung upon each side of her cheeks in a fluffy tangle, while she kept her eyes on the pianist, an old man with watery eyes and a bald head, who pounded away in a matter-of-fact way, as if he were only trying to earn his salary.

The audience laughed and applauded, and drank glasses of beer that were served by two waiters. One of these waiters was a saw-toothed young fellow, with a furtive glance and shaky hands, but the other was a stalwart man, with ruddy cheeks and a drooping mustache.

"D'yez want yer beer or do you not?" he was saying. "Faith, yez ordered it, an' Oi hov' something ter do 'sides bringin' beer fer folks es don't know their own mind."

The man he spoke to had been sitting low in his chair, with a silk hat pulled over his eyes; but now, as he turned his head enough to look up into the waiters' eyes, the latter started and muttered, under his breath:

"Be ther powers, if it ain't Simon Shroker, the horse sport, Oi'm a goat. Yis, it is, ez sure ez my name is Pat McGlone."

"Give me the beer," growled Stroker, "and tell that gentleman that has just come in I want to speak to him. I'll go back of the stage."

Simon took the glass of beer and drank it at a draught. Then he handed McGlone a quarter and strode away to the back of the stage, where he seemed to be well known, and was allowed to pass the improvised stage door, not only without question, but as if he had a right to go through.

"Be gob! This here is the fust toime Oi've ever seen him here durin' a performance," muttered Pat McGlone, as he pocketed the quarter. "He allers seems ez if he doesn't want any one to know that he owns the place. But to-night he don't seem to care. I wonder what is in the wind? I wish Bin Ward wuz here, to help me worruk it out, fer Bin could do that same moighty quick!"

At this moment there was a yell of "Waiter" from the other side of the place, and Pat rushed over to attend to his business.

When the sport made his way to the room at the back of the stage he found himself in a narrow space, with a gas jet at the top of a pipe sticking out of the ground. There were two doors—one leading into the men's dressing room, and the other to the women's, while immediately in front of him was an expanse of dirty canvas which he knew to be the back of the scene that faced the audience.

Two or three performers, in their bright-colored dresses and stage paint, were standing huddled up in the wings, and a gruff man in a check suit, with a red nose and thick arms and legs, was sitting on a high stool in the "first entrance," with a paper before him on which were the names of the performers in regular order as they were to go on and do their "turns."

"Well, Bloggs, how's business?" asked Stroker.

The gruff man, having some kind of pulmonary affection that had almost destroyed his voice, spoke in a wheezy whisper that occasionally became a growl, and which had a most peculiar effect.

"Business is bad," he whispered. "Der guys don't seem ter care fer d'e Island at all, d'ese lays, an' no matter how good der show is, d'ey don't fly in good. I'm t'inkin' it 'ud pay yer to give all yer time ter der track an' let d'is joint go. I do, sure."

"Where's the Quaker?" asked Stroker, abruptly.

"He ain't here."

"He was to meet me here to-night."

"I don't care. He ain't come in, I tell yer," responded Bloggs, in a tone of impatience. Then, raising his voice a little, so that it sounded like a blizzard blowing through a screen door, he said, to the girl on the stage who was dancing: "Shake yer foot d'ere, will yer? Got leaden shoes on? What's der matter wi'd yer? Waggle ye'r heels! Give d'e audience some show fer its money! Golblarn yer!"

The girl hastily glanced toward the wing, and danced more furiously than ever, while the pianist almost had convulsions as he thumped away.

"Durn d'ese yer bum performers! If I wuzn't ter watch d'em all der time d'ey wouldn't do nothing," continued Bloggs, in an aggrieved way.

"Let some one else run the stage for a while. I want to talk to you," said the horse magnate.

Bloggs beckoned to a man with burnt cork on his face, who was apparently waiting for his turn, and who took the stool that Bloggs surrendered to him quite as a matter of course.

There was a little room, only about eight feet square, at the back of the stage, in one corner, that Bloggs opened with a key; it was known as the manager's room. It was here the money and tickets were counted, and no one was allowed to enter it except Bloggs and those whom he introduced.

As he went in now and turned on a gas jet on the wall, he dropped upon a bench against the wall and wheezed painfully. Then he reached for a bottle of whisky, on a shelf convenient to his hand, and poured some of the liquor in a glass.

The door closed and Stroker and Slater were in the room.

"Here's to you, Mr. Slater," observed Bloggs. "I have ter take d'is for my asthma. Have some?"

"Verily, it is an ungodly drink, an' it is mortifying to the body as well as the soul," said the Quaker sport, solemnly.

"You don't want none, eh? All right. Here, Mr. Stroker, you'll have a taste, I know," observed Bloggs, as he pulled the bottle from in front of Slater.

"Peace, my friend! Be not so hasty!" interposed Slater, as he seized the bottle. "Verily, I think it is well to mortify the body and soul sometimes. Besides, I am athirst, and I would fain assuage it."

He assuaged it with a particularly stiff drink of the liquor, and as he smacked his lips, passed the bottle to Mr. Stroker.

"Now, Slater, I want to know what is to be done about this mare Fury," began Simon. "Your niece sent a man up to

the track this morning with an order for him to take the mare, and he's taken her."

"Well, friend Stroker, the mare belongs to her. There is no doubt about that."

"I thought it belonged to you?"

"I didn't think she would ever interfere with it, friend Simon; but the mare has always been her own. She owned the father and mother of the filly, and the horses are all Ruth's. I cannot say anything about them, if she wants to handle them herself. You knew the risk you were taking from the beginning."

The Quaker sport was in earnest, and, as usual with him, he forgot his Quaker dialect for the time. But now he thought of it, as he added, meekly: "I am sorry for thee, friend Stroker, but this is a world of sore disappointments."

"Quit your canting, Slater! The point is this: That fellow Ben Ward has taken the mare away and put her in a private stable, just a little way from the track, and I don't know what he means to do with her."

"I know what he means ter do wi'd her," broke in Bloggs, who had been smoking a black cigar in a manner of intense enjoyment. "He's going ter run her at Brighton Beach, Sheepshead and Long Branch."

"He is, eh? Well, we'll see!"

Stroker had hardly uttered these words when there was a loud noise in the auditorium, of people shouting and chairs overturning, while in the midst of the melee a pistol shot rang out.

"D'em there fellers is a fightin' again. It's deuced hard ter run a decent place when d'em d'ere Indians from der race track get in," wheezed Bloggs, as he jumped from the bench and squeezed past the others to get to the scene of the trouble.

Stroker and Slater followed, and were just in time to see Detective Ben plant his fist in Jim Rodney's face and send that worthy flying against the piano, knocking the old pianist clean off his seat.

A dozen other tough-looking men were on their feet, looking to see where it would be well to begin striking. The Race Course Detective, his face flushed and his fists clenched, was standing in the midst of the scrimmage, defying every one, and ready to practice his pugilistic skill on all who might oppose him.

"Friend Simon, now is thy chance to smite the enemy hip and thigh," whispered Slater in Stroker's ear, as he saw that Ben Ward's back was toward them. "Give him a crack on the head with your whip," he continued.

But Simon Stroker was not a coward, and shrugged his shoulders in such an impatient, disgusted way, that Slater saw in a moment he would not do it.

"Thou'rt a fool, in some ways, friend Simon!" he hissed. "That young keener is working against thee, and he should be chastised."

He snatched the crop from Stroker's hand as he spoke, and, swinging it above his head, would have brought it down with all his force upon the special's head but for an interposition quite unexpected.

The silver knob gleamed in the gas-light, and it seemed as if nothing could save the young police detective, when a ponderous fist smashed into Mathew's mouth, loosening two or three teeth, and filling his mouth with knuckles, as a voice exclaimed:

"Bedad, Pat McGlone is to the fore and don't yez forgit it, y'e tallow-faced shpalpeen!" was shouted.

CHAPTER VI.

SLATER'S MIDNIGHT JOB.

The Quaker fell in a heap beneath the weight of Pat McGlone's hand, just as Detective Ben turned and saw the action.

"Thanks, Pat," said the police special, quietly, as he placed his hand in the great paw of his friend. "These hyar fellers can't be trusted when they hez

too much uv a sanctimonious way. I've found thet thar' out long ago. It's the same in ther West ez it is in ther East, too."

The dropping of Jim Rodney and the smashing in the mouth of Mathew Slater ended the fracas. Fights were not unusual in this place, and the audience settled down again to enjoy the entertainment—very little, if anything, disconcerted by the row.

The pianist picked up his stool and resumed his place, and the man with burnt cork face appeared at the wing and nodded for the musician to play. Then two knock-about song and dance men came out, and every one looked at the stage except the people in whom the reader is particularly interested.

Detective Ben beckoned with his chin to Pat McGlone, in so slight a way that no one would have noticed the action unless they had been watching him closely.

It happened that others besides Pat saw the movement, however, and when the young police special, with a contemptuous glance at Rodney, who had arisen to his feet, stepped outside the front door into the glare of light and noise of the main thoroughfare of the Bowery, Slater pulled Stroker by the coat tail to draw his attention to the fact that Pat McGlone was following the detective.

"All right, Slater; I see. Do you think I'm blind?" demanded Stroker, impatiently. "Your mouth is bleeding. Do you know it?"

There was an expression of intense malevolence in Slater's colorless eyes as he held a handkerchief to his mouth, and it was easy to see that Ben Ward must be on his guard if he was to escape injury at the hands of the Quaker.

"Come with us, Rod," whispered Stroker to Rodney, as the big sport, with Slater, reached the door of the place and looked up and down the avenue.

"All right, Mr. Stroker. But bli' me if I ain't tired of gettin' plugged and punched by every bloomin' cove as feels like doin' it, without some pay."

Rodney grumbled, because it was his way, but he did as he was told, and sidled out of the place just as Pat McGlone came in again. The others had all disappeared, and Jim Rodney mingled with the crowd that moved up and down the narrow avenue between the stands and booths and was lost to sight too.

Evidently there was something in the wind besides the mere enjoyment of the pleasures of Coney Island.

There was one man who had been struck with surprise at the appearance of Mathew Slater in the vaudeville theater, and that was Pat McGlone.

He could not get away at once, or he would have dropped everything and followed Slater and Stroker when they left the place. As it was, anxious as he might be to see what adventures were to befall his young detective friend, he was compelled to serve a dozen glasses of beer before he could think of attending to his own affairs.

"Bedad, there wuz that gray-faced shpalpeen ez murdered old Lenz, an' he wuz enj'ying himself around here ez if he hadn't anything on th' moind uv him. Faith, he thinks he'll niver be called upon to answer for that murder, but Oi'll brung it home till him, es sure ez my name is Pat McGlone."

Pat made these observations to himself while handing beer about the room, but he kept his eyes open in the hope of seeing Ben Ward, and obtaining some explanation from him of certain things he did not understand. He did not doubt that the detective special would wait for him until he could get away, and that he was somewhere just around the place, in spite of the fact that he had gone out.

"Hello, cull! How's tricks?" suddenly squeaked a voice about as high as his apron strings, and Pat accidentally banged the tin tray in his hand on top of a swell Derby hat that was bobbing about beneath him.

"Be the powers! Phwat's that?" "Oh, come off d'e ice! What's d'e matter wi'd yer? Ain't yer got no more

sense d'an ter slap er tin roof on me dice?" remonstrated the squeaky voice.

Pat gave a glass of beer—the last on his tray—to a thirsty-looking man, and said, with a grin:

"Phwat's thot you're a doin' here, Snap?"

"I'm here ter hunt for the mug w'ot done old Lenz. Dat's what I'm here for. See?"

"You mane—"

Snap stood on tip-toe, to put his hand over the drooping mustache of Pat McGlone, as he whispered:

"D'yer want ter give d'e whole snap away? Don't yer know as he stands in wi'd d'e mug as runs d'is here shanty, and d'at whatever you was to say here would go right back to him, eh?"

"Phwat's the matter wi'd yez? They've both gone out thegither, an' it's meself ez manes ter go afther thim ez soon ez Oi kin git away."

As Pat spoke, there was a noise on the stage that betokened the grand climax of the evening's entertainment; the curtain came down and the show was over. The pianist gave a few convulsive bangs upon the instrument, and then closed it with a crash.

"Now, Snap, let's git," whispered Pat. "Oi've done me worruk fer the day, an' Oi'm goin' ter see phwat diviltry thim two fellers is afther out there."

"I'm wi'd yer, cull. Dat's what I came here fer. See? Dat dame what lost der will has mashed me clear t'rough, an' I'm goin' ter find out what's come of d'at d'ere will, sure."

"Oi c'u'd tell yez what's come uv it," remarked Pat, significantly, as he threw his white apron and jacket into a closet, and drew forth his coat and hat.

The two friends reached the outside of the show, and looked about them. Then, with a tug at his companion's arm, Pat McGlone struck straight out across the country for a single light that he could see at the edge of what appeared to be a black wall outlined across the starry sky, but that he knew to be a clump of woods.

"Where the blazes are yer takin' a cove, Pat?" asked Snap, breathlessly, as soon as they had got clear of the network of booths and merry-go-rounds that occupy so much space at that part of Coney Island.

Pat said nothing for a moment. He knew his ground pretty well, but it was dark, and he stumbled over odd bits of wood that had drifted up from the ocean, and occasionally sunk into the sand where holes had been scooped out by accident or design, and it was not easy traveling. Then, as he struck a road leading off to the right, he answered, through his set teeth:

"Oi'm a takin' yez ter a crib over yonder, where's there goin' ter be some diviltry, if Oi know the soigns."

"What crib is it, out there in der woods?"

"It's a brick stable, belongin' ter Miss Ruth, an' Ben Ward told me that little mare, Fury, phwat's goin' ter show the other flyers a trick or two, is up there in his care."

"You don't say?"

The two scuttled across the country at a good speed. They soon left the roadway, and found themselves in cabbage patches, corn fields, and meadows of grass alternately, but with the single light ever in view.

As they drew nearer they saw that the light came from a window in a brick house which stood close to the railroad track, overshadowed by the tall poplars that grow so thickly on Long Island.

A fence separated the small garden in front of the house from the railroad, and by its side was a clear space leading to the stable, which was built close to the house, and was evidently part of it. A wide gate showed where the horses and vehicles could go into the grounds about the house, from the railroad track, while on the outer side of the track the public road ran, by which Coney Island or Manhattan Beach could be reached, according to which direction was taken where the road forked, half a mile below.

The night was dark, because, although the stars gave a dim light, the moon was still behind the woods, and would not rise for about an hour. But this did not trouble Pat McGlone, who knew the locality thoroughly. He walked straight across the railroad track, with Snap at his heels, and entered the front garden.

Suddenly, with a muttered "Whist!" he dropped upon the ground, and pulled Snap down with him.

Snap didn't know what it was all about, but had faith in Pat McGlone's gumption, so obeyed without question, when his companion, by a pull, signified for him to make himself invisible.

The two hardly breathed as they saw a dark figure come around the corner of the house and move straight in their direction.

Pat McGlone drew himself together, ready to fly at the throat of the intruder if he should be discovered, and Snap felt in his pocket for the short black-jack he usually carried, for defensive purposes only.

Both saw that the dark figure was that of Mathew Slater, but neither could imagine what his purpose could be in walking about that garden after midnight.

The light still flashed from the front window on the ground floor, but Pat and Snap had had no opportunity to look into the room, and evidently Slater did not want to be seen by its occupant.

"Say, Snap," whispered Pat.

"Well? What's bitin' yer?"

"Do yez see phwat he hez in his hand?"

Snap moved hurriedly, as if he would get up in the excitement of the moment, but Pat held him fast.

"The mug hez that will, as sure as d'is is night," whispered Snap.

Meanwhile the Quaker, bareheaded, was moving softly about, occasionally looking fearfully at the house, as if afraid of being watched, with a document folded like the will that had been lost from the office of Lenz, Bach & Lenz, in his hand!

He stopped at last at the foot of a poplar not more than a dozen yards from where Pat and Snap lay curled up behind some shrubbery.

"Verily, this is a good place, and I can always get it if I happen to want it," they heard Mathew mutter.

Then they saw that he held a trowel in his hand, with which he scooped a hole in the soft earth close to the base of the tree. The earth was so soft that he could have pulled it away even with his bare hand, so that, with the sharp point of the trowel, it was an easy matter to make a hole about fifteen inches deep in the course of a few minutes.

"Say, Pat, d'is yer' is too easy. We won't do a thing but just swipe that paper when he goes, an' d'en we've got him dead ter rights," whispered Snap.

The hole dug to his satisfaction, the Quaker sport fumbled in his pockets, and brought forth a tin box such as is used for the mustard imported from England. He folded the paper, tucked it into this box, put the lid on, and dropped it into the hole. Then he troweled the earth back again, and drew the grass and rubbish over the place, so that all signs of the work he had done were removed, save for a little loose earth scattered about which he could not dispose of entirely.

"That's safe," he muttered, as he walked slowly past Pat McGlone and Snap, so close that they almost could have touched him.

He had reached the corner of the house behind, when the burly figure of Simon Stroker was sharply defined against the starry sky, and a smaller individual, whom they recognized even in the dark as Jim Rodney, stood by his side.

"Mathew," whispered the big sport.

Slater moved quickly over to the house, and Stroker, seizing him impatiently by the arm, pulled him out of sight behind the house.

"Now, Snap, bedad, it's toime fer us to see phwat's goin' ter be done here. It looks dangerous fer Detective Bin," exclaimed Pat McGlone, as he sprang to his feet.

"I'm wi'd yer, cull!" answered Snap.

Pat dashed across to the house, to peep

into the window and see what was going on inside.

"Be jabbers! Oi didn't know it wuz so high! Faith, Oi'll hov' to cloimb up!"

Pat put the toe of his shoe into a slight jamb in the brick wall, and, grasping the window sill, which was a few inches above his head, drew himself up, with Snap holding him beneath.

Before Pat could get his eyes on a level with the room, there was a shouting of several voices confusedly inside, the light went out, and all was still!

"What's the circus, Pat?" whispered Snap.

"Be the saints, Oi don't know," declared the Irishman, as he allowed himself to drop to the ground.

CHAPTER VII.

A CHASE IN THE DARK.

Let us follow the detective from the time that he left the vaudeville booth after knocking down Jim Rodney.

No one knew better than this quick-witted, active young man that a fight in such a place might lead to dangerous complications, and that, with his present mission on his hands—to take care of Ruth Slater's clever mare, and to try to run down the murderer of Emil Lenz—it would be unwise for him to embroil himself unless there were likely to be profitable results.

He had knocked down Jim Rodney because the immediate circumstances seemed to demand it, and he was gratified to see that Pat McGlone was not in the humor to allow Slater, or any one else, to impose on his friend.

But as soon as the Quaker fell, he felt it would be the part of wisdom to get away, so he beckoned to Pat, whispered to him that he was going to run over to the crib, and departed.

He struck across the country, taking the same route so soon to be followed by Pat McGlone and Snap, but without any light in the house to guide him, wherein they had the advantage. It was pitch dark.

He had reached the road, with its mingled sand and dust, before he knew that some one was following him. He arrived at that knowledge in the mysterious way that can hardly be described, but which is a consciousness that seems to be conveyed by a sixth sense.

He could feel that he was followed.

The footsteps of the pursuers made no sound, and when he looked behind him it was like peering at a thick black curtain, with the lights of the Coney Island Bowery on the right.

But Ben Ward knew that two or three people were on his track, and he prepared for trouble.

He stopped short, and, stooping, ran across the road, and crouched down against the rail fence that separated a cabbage patch from the public highway.

Hardly had he done so, when two figures swept past him so swiftly and smoothly that, for an instant, he felt that superstitious terror to which the bravest of men are liable.

The figures were taller than those of ordinary men, and seemed to be much stouter. Moreover, they were misshapen, for their heads seemed to protrude from their chests, instead of rising above their shoulders.

But the strangest thing was their motion. They were going along at the speed of a very fast run, but they were not running!

Detective Ben's eyes felt as if they would burst as he strained his vision to understand what he saw. If the figures had been running, their heads would have bobbed up and down—supposing that they were really men.

The figures were just disappearing in the darkness when the detective saw what they were, and he burst involuntarily into a loud laugh.

"Ha! ha! ha!"

His laughter rang out on the still night air, in three distinct monosyllables, then he clapped his hand over his mouth.

The mysterious figures were nothing more or less than men on bicycles!

"Don't be er durned fool, Ben Ward!" he muttered. "Ef you'd been ez free with yer cackle in Arizony, yer wouldn't be hyar now."

As the detective's "Ha! ha! ha!" pealed forth, the men on the bicycles stopped, as with one accord. Then they turned, and came running back, until they pulled up immediately opposite the place where the police special clung to the bottom of the fence.

As they stopped, Ben ran as fast as he could along the fence, crouching near the earth.

He had recognized the two, and was as sure they would kill him if they had the chance as he was that he would despatch one or both of them should it become necessary.

As he ran he drew from his pocket a serviceable double-acting Smith and Wesson six-shooter, and held it ready for business.

"Verily, friend Simon, I fear we have fallen among the tents of the Philistines. Perhaps they will be delivered into our hands."

There was no mistaking the whining, nasal tones of Mathew Slater, the Quaker sport, any more than there could be no doubt that the response was in the voice of Simon Stroker.

"Shut your mouth, you fool! Where's that lantern?"

"Rodney, thy man servant, hath it, and he tarries behind. Lo! here he comes!"

As Mathew spoke, a great puffing and blowing was heard, and Jim Rodney, afoot, came running up in great distress.

"W'ot's the bloomin' row? Bli' me, if I ain't 'ad enough of this 'ere bizness. It's enough to kill a cove!"

Stroker snatched a dark lantern from the disgruntled Rod, without answering his grumbings, and opened the slide so that a shaft of light was turned toward the fence.

Of course the young police delegate was not there, and with a muttered curse Stroker ran along the fence, sure that the detective could not be far away.

"Curse him! If we find him now, half our difficulty will be over, and I'll have the mare just where I want her before he can get to her. Badger must win the Brooklyn Handicap, or we lose our grip."

Stroker spoke these words aloud in his excitement, and Slater asked, in wheedling tones:

"Verily, thee would not kill him, would thee?"

"I'm not a murderer," was Stroker's gruff response, as he ran along, with his lantern before him.

For a hundred yards, at least, he ran; then he stopped, in a rage.

"Come along, Mathew! He's got away from us this time. We'll get to the crib without losing any more time. Rod, run as fast as you can, and you'll get there before we will, on the wheels."

With these words Stroker threw himself upon his safety, and dashed up the road, closely followed by Mathew Slater, who was much more agile than might have been expected in one so ungainly.

"Whew!" gasped Ben Ward, as he arose from behind a big stone on the opposite side of the road.

He had run across while Stroker was grumbling about the absence of Rodney with the lantern, and had been within ten feet of his pursuers all the time!

The young shadower greatly enjoyed the joke, for he sat upon the big stone and laughed noiselessly.

Then he stepped across the road, and leaped lightly over the fence, on his way to the house designated as the "crib," and where he had left the mare, Fury, for a little while, that he might be able to see Pat McGlone, with no more protection than was afforded by strong bolts and locks on the stable door.

Now that Detective Ben had obtained control of the mare, by the order of Ruth Slater, her real owner, he was perfectly aware that it was to the interest of Simon Stroker to prevent her winning any of the races in the spring for which he would have backed her had she remained his property, and particularly the Brooklyn Handicap, and the police special was

therefore determined, not only that the mare should win, but that Stroker should not be allowed to see the beautiful animal again save when she was out for public inspection. Stroker had talked about preventing Ben seeing the mare that morning, and now the shoe was on the other foot.

"Ez fer that feller Slater," pondered Ben, "he's had a hand in killin' old Lenz, I'm sure, an', moreover, he's got thet will, or destroyed it, that I know. Miss Ruth doesn't suspect her uncle, an' I don't think she realizes all it means to her, so long as she hez a good home an' all the spendin' money she wants. But she ain't goin' ter be swindled so long ez Ben Ward hez any say-so, ter say nothin' of it bein' my duty ter bring thet thar' Quaker chap ter justice. An' I'll do it, jest ez sure ez he an' Simon Stroker means ter get at thet thar' mare to-night."

The wary Ben kept his six-shooter in hand, and struck across the fields toward the "crib," with Jim Rodney plunging and stumbling and grumbling about a quarter of a mile ahead.

As he expected, he arrived first, and, although he had no doubt that the three schemers would all be there within a few minutes, he had time to arrange things for their coming.

First, he went in by the front door and lighted the gas in the front parlor, leaving the window blind drawn to the top. He knew that if he did not make everything open, it would be much easier for his enemies to carry out any designs they might have, because they would not be afraid of observation.

On the other hand, the light from the parlor could be seen for a mile or two, and there were straggling houses near enough for the occupants to watch proceedings if there should be any outrageous action in the glare of light in the unshaded parlor.

From the parlor he walked briskly through the house to the rear.

"Now to see how Fury likes her change of quarters," thought Ben.

At the back of the kitchen was a strong oaken door, thickly studded with great knobs of iron, showing where there were nails driven in to make the door powerful enough to resist any onslaught.

There had been valuable horses kept at this place before, and the stable was one of the best protected apartments in the whole building.

A large, heavy lock, and two big bolts further strengthened the door, and Ben produced from the inside pocket of his blue shirt, a patent key, disproportionately small to the great lock. With one twist of this small key the ponderous tumblers of the lock fell from their places, and the door was released. Then Ben drew back the two heavy bolts and opened the door.

Fury was standing in a corner, lazily munching hay, and as Ben turned on the gas get that had been lowered, in its cage of iron network, the mare looked around and uttered a low whinny of welcome.

"Ah, my beauty! They talk about yer temper, but it all depends on who comes ter yer, an' how they do it. Thar' ain't a horse ez I ever see ez wouldn't be all right with me, an' ez fer this hyar mare, she's ez gentle ez er kitten when she's rightly handled."

As Ben muttered thus he walked about the roomy stable, and looked to see that everything was right.

There was another heavy door immediately opposite that by which Ben had entered from the kitchen, and it was as strong as the other. There were the heavy iron nails, the patent lock and the two heavy bolts, all securely fastened, as the detective assured himself by a hasty but thorough examination.

"She ain't had any visitors since I was hyar, at all events," he mused. "But thar' ain't no security ez she won't afore long. Wal, we are ready fer 'em, ain't we, beauty?"

He fondled the mare's nose as he spoke, and stroked her neck with a caressing gentleness that pleased the animal, for she nestled close to his blue shirt, and looked at him with her great brown eyes in a way that was so nearly human as to con-

vince any one that the intelligence of the lower animals, as they are called, is much greater than that of many men.

Suddenly he stepped back and listened. There was a noise in the yard which was not that caused by the sighing of the night wind. His pursuers had arrived?

The Race Course Detective smiled, but there was a tightening of his lips that indicated determination to give the newcomers a warm reception, if necessary.

He walked to the door that led to the yard, and assured himself once more that the fastenings were all solid. Then he went to a corn bin in one corner of the stable, and thrust his hand deep among the grain. He drew forth a peculiarly-shaped piece of iron, and took it to the door. It was a wedge, and, with a dexterous twist, Ben fixed it in the crack of the door, so that the more it might be pushed from the outside, the tighter it would wedge the door shut.

There was a small window high in the wall that looked out to the yard, but this was crossed and recrossed with thick iron bars, so that it would be impossible to effect an entrance that way. The window was at least eight feet above the ground.

"Thet's all right. I suppose Stroker an' thet other feller think they kin get the mare out, but I don't think they kin. They may knock me out in the attempt, but if they do, I'll give 'em something ter remember me by. I know they meant to run the mare as a blind, and let that big horse of theirs, Badger, pull off the stakes. But I'll block their game, ez sure ez my name is Battery Ben."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ENEMY GETS IN.

Ben knew that Simon Stroker had made up his mind to take the mare away from him, if he could, and he had no doubt that Slater would assist Stroker in any plan that might bring discomfiture to the young detective.

The fact of their following him to this place, where they suspected the mare to be, together with the conversation that he had overheard on the road, convinced him that he was in a perilous situation.

They might not murder him, but he was convinced that, if they considered it necessary, they would do him grievous bodily harm. They had made up their minds that Badger must win the Brooklyn Handicap, as well as the Futurity at Sheepshead Bay, and it was essential that the only dangerous rival of their horse, the mare Fury, must be kept out of the races, or, at least, prevented from winning.

So long as Stroker had the mare in his keeping he could do what he pleased with her, and it was only to-day, just as Battery Ben appeared on the scene at the paddock at Brighton Beach, that Stroker had decided to run Badger to win both races, and that the mare could not be considered.

Now it was different. Ruth Slater had taken her mare away from him, and, with the detective's help, meant her pet to win. So Stroker had resolved that the mare must be got away from Ben without delay, to make sure of Badger's success.

"But they sha'n't get at yer, beauty, while Ben can do anything," whispered the detective, as he left the stable and made his way to the parlor.

He had settled in his mind what to do, and he felt satisfied that he could block the game of the enemy yet.

"They'll look through ther window, of course, an' if they don't see me hyer in ther parlor they'll know I am in ther stable. I don't care ter give away ter them just what I'm doin', so I'll hev' ter fix something."

He glanced at the window, and was satisfied that there was no one watching him. Then he hastily removed his coat, and appeared in his blue sailor shirt. Off came his hat, and he pushed back his clustering curls, as he looked about the parlor.

There was a lounge along one side of the room, to the right of the window,

and several soft cushions, of various sizes, lay about.

Ben took two or three cushions, and in a few moments had wrapped his coat around them in such a way that they might have been mistaken for himself, lying on the sofa.

He added to the reality of the figure by placing his soft hat upon them, so that from the window it might be supposed that he had fallen into a doze, with his hat pulled over his eyes.

Ben worked quickly, and in a remarkably short time had arranged everything to his satisfaction.

"Pretty good imitation of Battery Ben, by George!" he muttered. "Thet thar' old scout out in Arizony thet showed me how he used ter fool ther Injuns wuz er mighty useful friend."

There was a scraping and rattling sound outside, and, as Battery Ben dropped hurriedly behind the lounge, where he could just see the window through a small space between the furniture and the wall, Simon Stroker's face came slowly into view at the window.

Ben could picture the big man stubbing his toes against the brickwork, as he drew himself up by his fingers on the window sill, and he laughed a silent laugh that indicated intense enjoyment of the situation.

"I'd jest like ter fire er rotten egg at him. By gum, I could hit him right squar' on ther forehead, and ther yolk 'ud come pouring inter his eyes an' down his nose, an'—"

But here laughter checked the detective's utterance, and he drew up his foot convulsively, and shot it out, in his enjoyment of the conceit.

Fortunately for him Stroker's face had disappeared before he did this, or the detective would have been betrayed, for the sudden movement of his foot brought down all the cushions from the lounge, and the dummy was strewn about the room in fragments.

"Now, our dear friend Stroker will go 'round ter ther stable, sure," muttered Ben, as he restored the dummy, and hastened to the stable again. "Wonder whar' Slater is? I suppose he's somewhere 'round. But I like ter know just whar' the enemy is, all ther time."

As a matter of fact, Slater had his own private trouble with the will that he had been carrying about with him, and that he had determined to secrete in the yard while Stroker's attention was taken up with something else. Of course, the reader knows that Slater killed Mr. Lenz, and stole the will that meant so much to him, but how he managed to get out of the office without being seen is a mystery that may be explained in a future chapter.

This was a thing that concerned Slater alone, because, although he was equally interested with Stroker in preventing Fury winning the Brooklyn Handicap, and in allowing the race to be won by Badger, the plot against Ruth, to keep her out of the money bequeathed to her by her father, was something in which Slater had no partner. He and Stroker both needed money, and each was determined to have it through the horse Badger, but their disposal of the money when it should be won was a private matter with each of them.

The house in which the detective had made himself so much at home was a large building that had been purchased by her father nearly twelve years ago for a country resort. Near the sea and the race tracks, it just suited him, for he loved nature and had an equally strong affection for all kinds of sport.

William Slater was known to every sporting man in the country, and his string of horses was always considered one to place faith in.

At this house he used to spend a good part of the year, with congenial companions, and here it was that little Ruth gained her first knowledge of horsemanship. When her father died she was only six years old, but she could ride her Shetland pony with as firm and true a seat as any one on the Island.

The parlor was handsomely furnished, for Ruth had often come here in the summer with her uncle to entertain a party of young friends, and the house was never suffered to fall into dust and disuse. Servants were sent to clean it and keep it in order every week, and hence it was always ready for habitation.

At the back of the parlor there was a large room, fitted up as a gymnasium, with a punching bag, vaulting horse, turning bars, and other apparatus, while foils and boxing gloves hung on the walls, and an assortment of riding whips and spurs were to be seen in corners and on the mantelpiece.

At the back of the spacious gymnasium was a kitchen, and on the right side of the gymnasium, with doors from the parlor, kitchen and gymnasium, was a cosy diningroom. Up-stairs were several bedrooms.

Ben walked through the gymnasium, giving the bag a punch as he passed, and noting that the two windows looking upon the garden were closely shuttered, with heavy iron bars across, to guard them from entrance. Then he strolled to the stable and listened.

There was a sawing sound somewhere.

"Oho! The game hez begun!" muttered Ben, as he glanced upward at the window and distinguished a faint shadow through the dirty glass.

There was no light in the stable, and he could stand and look out without any fear of being seen.

The sawing kept on, and Ben knew that some one was trying to saw through a bar across the window. A second look convinced him of what he had suspected—that it was Stroker who was so busily engaged.

"Cheek! Wonder ef thet feller thinks he kin get ther mare out of the window?" thought Ben. "I'm thinking he'll hev' er pretty long job gitting through thet bar, anyhow. Ther bars are wrought steel, an' I don't think any such tools ez he hez up thar' will make any impression on 'em."

Ben's opinion proved to be correct, for, as he looked and listened, he heard Stroker swear, and then he disappeared from the window.

"Given it up, eh? Sensible man!" observed Ben.

But though Simon Stroker had stopped trying to effect an entrance in that way, Battery Ben was not foolish enough to suppose that he had given it up, and he walked to the mare's head and stroked her nose, as he considered what was likely to happen next.

"Guess Pat McGlone will be hyar pretty soon," he mused. "He knows whar' I am, an' thet I may need him, fer, besides the mare, thar's thet feller Slater ter be watched. By George, I hev' enough on my hands jist now."

It was at this moment, although Battery Ben did not know it, that Pat McGlone and Snap were lying at the back of the shrubbery, watching Mathew Slater deposit the will in the hole at the foot of the poplar.

Ben patted Fury's neck, and half turned away to walk into the gymnasium, where he could peep through a chink in the shutters, he thought, and perhaps see what Stroker was about, when he thought he heard a noise at the front of the house.

"Suppose Stroker hez got in at thet window, an' found out thet it is only a dummy on ther lounge! I'll hev' ter go and see how things look, anyhow."

He walked cautiously into the gymnasium, but could not distinguish anything outside, in the darkness. That Stroker was somewhere about he knew, but what he was about he could not guess.

Suddenly there was a sound of scuffling hoofs in the stable.

Like a flash the detective's hand flew to his hip pocket, and, revolver in hand, he dashed to the back part of the house. He reached the kitchen, and was about to run into the stable when he found his way blocked.

The door between the stable and kitchen was closed and fastened.

"Cuss' him! He hez got at ther mare!" hissed Battery Ben, as he struggled to open the door. It was useless, for the door was as firm as a rock.

There was no time to be lost. If once the mare was got away, it might mean utter ruin of her hopes of ever winning anything, even if he got her back again. A very few minutes would be enough to fix the poor mare, in the hands of people that understood the nefarious practices of rendering race horses useless.

Ben ran into the parlor, saw that the dummy was still on the sofa, and then made his way to the hall by the side of the parlor, where the front door led to a porch that was overhung with shrubbery in the summer, but that now showed little besides dried-up branches and twigs.

With hasty fingers he unlocked the door, drew back two heavy bolts, and loosened a chain bolt. Then he placed his hand to the night latch, and in another instant would have opened the door, had his attention not been distracted by a sound in the parlor.

With one blow he dashed the parlor door open, and looked for the cause of the noise.

He just had time to see the Fifth Avenue Sport strike the dummy on the sofa a vicious blow with a poker, as he uttered a very un-Quaker-like oath, and to hear Stroker's voice raised in angry remonstrance, when the light went out and all was still.

CHAPTER IX.

FURY HAS A JAUNT.

When Pat McGlone saw the light go out so suddenly in the parlor they knew that there was something in the wind that called for their immediate action. The detective was in the house, they knew, and they also knew that Slater and Stroker were determined to take from him the mare Fury, that would be such a dangerous rival to their own horse Badger.

Pat had distinguished the voices of Slater and Stroker in the parlor, and he knew that they had no rightful business in there. What was to be done?

"Let's git around ter the back of the joint, Pat. We kin plug their game, if we ain't too dumb. But we got ter git the mud off our hoofs, an' not let it paste us to the ground, you betcher life."

Pat and Snap ran around to the side of the house, and were surprised to find that the door leading into the gymnasium, which also had a porch, about twice as large as that at the front, was wide open.

"Here's the way them mugs got into the dive," whispered Snap. "Say, ain't they dandies?"

Pat McGlone did not answer. He was in no humor to give praise to the two men who were trying to circumvent Battery Ben, even for their shrewdness in villainy.

He peeped into the doorway, but could not see any one. He had just time to draw himself into the shadow of the porch, behind a large rocking chair, and to drag Snap to his knees beside him, when Stroker came to the door, holding Rodney by the arm.

"It's a bloomin'—" began Rodney.

What he would have said cannot be known, for Stroker gave him a cuff on the side of the ear that sent him reeling against the rocking chair, nearly knocking Pat and Snap flat on the floor.

"I'll kill you, Rod, if you say another word till that mare is safe in the stable over yonder."

Stroker's voice was low and cruel, and there could be no doubt that his threat was not an idle one. When he was aroused he would be more likely to commit murder than Mathew Slater, although he was not the man to commit any crime for the mere sake of doing it. He must have a motive for everything he did, and when that motive existed, nothing could turn him from his purpose.

"Verily, friend Stro—" puf in Slater, as he appeared in the doorway.

"Shut off your talk!" was Stroker's gruff command, and the sport became si-

lent accordingly, although he could not resist the temptation to step forward on the porch and peer into the darkness in the direction of the poplar, as if he would see whether his secret had revealed itself.

Little did Mathew Slater suspect that his secret was a secret no longer, but that two of the men that he must have feared more than any others were in full possession of the fact that he had hidden the will of William Slater, his brother, and that their knowledge was enough to convict him of the crime of murder.

Stroker seized Rodney by the arm again, and whispered, in such low tones that Pat could only catch the words:

"Go around to the stable door and stand there till I bring out the mare. Then jump on her back and ride like the deuce to—"

The most interesting part of the direction was lost to Pat McGlone, for Stroker dropped his voice to an inaudible whisper, and only formed the words with his mouth, so that Rodney could understand them, but without allowing any one in the vicinity to get any idea whether the new stable for Fury was to be one mile away or fifty.

Rodney nodded, and, not trusting himself to say anything while within reach of Stroker's hand, slipped around to the back of the house to obey orders, while Stroker drew Slater into the house and closed the door carelessly, and without fastening it.

For an instant Pat waited. Then he whispered to Snap:

"They are going to take out the horse, so they air, an' we must not let it go. D'yer onderstand?"

"I hear yer shootin' off yer guff, but I ain't no mind reader, and I don't know what yer mean," answered Snap, as he arose to his feet and began to brush the sleeve of his coat with his hand. He was a dude in his way, was Snap.

"Well, you must go wan way, an Oi'll go the ither, an' we'll see if we can't shtop the mare goin' away betune us."

"All right. Which way am I ter go. Give yer orders, an' you'll find me w'd yer all der time."

"Follow Rodney, an' if he gives yer ony of his back talk, plug him with thot handy-billy yez hov'."

"Maybe I'll paste him one jist fer luck, anyhow," answered Snap, as he drew out his blackjack and struck it into the palm of his hand.

Snap did not wait for more conversation, but slipped around the house like a shadow on the heels of the unconscious Rodney.

"Thot's a useful b'ye, so he is," muttered Pat McGlone. "He'll see thot everything is roight over there, an' Oi'll attend ter things on this side, so I wull."

He drew himself slyly and silently into the gymnasium, and stood perfectly still for a few moments. He did not know who might be within arm's reach of him, and although he was brave enough in a fair fight, he did not fancy the idea of being hit unawares, and knocked down without seeing the hand that struck him.

All was silent, and he held his breath till the pain was terrible.

Then he stepped across the room cautiously, on tiptoe, with his fists clinched and a revolver in his coat pocket ready for any emergency.

"Be jabers! They air makin' a deuce of a noise out there. They don't seem to care who hears them," he muttered, as he opened the door leading to the kitchen.

"Buckle that strap, Slater. Don't you know anything about a horse?" queried Stroker's voice, impatiently.

"Verily, friend Stroker, thine is a hasty manner, and thy servant knoweth but little about the trappings of the warhorse."

"Warhorse be dashed!" replied Stroker. "This is a racehorse—not a warhorse. I don't believe you know the difference between a horse and a jackass."

There was a gas-jet burning in the stable, and Pat McGlone could see that Stroker and Slater were saddling the mare and that the outer door of the stable was open a little way.

"They ain't a goin' ter hov' thot horse if Pat McGlone can stop them," muttered

the Irishman. "But, be the powers, Oi don't know how I'm goin' to stop them."

He was moving on tiptoe toward the kitchen, where there was light enough from the stable for him to see his way, when suddenly a tight grip was laid on his arm, and he was pulled back somewhat violently.

Before he could say a word a hand was laid over his mouth, and Battery Ben's voice whispered:

"That you, Pat?"

Pat gently removed Ben's hand from his mouth, and turned as he answered, in soft but delighted accents:

"Indade it is thot same, darlint. But phwat's happenin' ter the mare beyant?"

"They are working the scheme very nicely, but I think we kin put ther blocks ter them," was the answer.

"Phwat shall we do? Shall we go out there and give them a racket afore they kin git away with the beauty, or wait till we see phwat they are going to do?"

"Follow me," was the detective's brief command.

He hastened through the kitchen, just as Stroker buckled the last strap that held the saddle in place. Another moment, and the mare would be safe. But at that moment Slater happened to look around and distinguished the forms of Ben and Pat in the gloom of the kitchen.

In a flash Mathew had swung the door to and fastened it with the spring lock.

"Durn his yellow picture!" shouted Ben.

He sprang to the door in the pitchy darkness, but could not open the spring lock immediately. While he was fumbling with it, he heard the door of the stable swing open with a bang. Then there was a shout from Stroker, a squeak from Snap, and, as Ben threw open the kitchen door again, he saw that the stable was empty.

"Come, Pat. They must be somewhar' jist around hyar!"

Out into the yard went the boy and Pat, but nothing could they see of the horse or the two men.

Snap was lying at full length near the stable door in a dazed condition, but how he got into it he could not tell, save that something had struck him as the swirl of hoofs had passed over him.

"But, you mugs can bet they've got the mare, an' it'll be a cold day when you get her again, unless you build a fire under yerselves right quick," observed Snap, as he rose to his feet, and began to brush his clothes with his hands with great solicitude.

"Horse stealing is a thing that they deal with in a mighty peculiar way out in Arizona," remarked Ben, as he looked ruefully at Fury's empty stall, "an' I dun'no' but what it is a good way, too. They just hang the fellow up ter a good high tree or telegraph pole, and let him kick his bootheels together ez long ez thar' is life in him."

"Well, they pinch a mug for horse thieving even in New York," said Snap. "So you are all right."

The detective had not been idle while talking, but, with a lantern that he had brought from the stable, was searching all over the yard for some sign that should tell him which way the two men had gone.

It was important to get the mare back at once, because if she remained in their power for a few hours, it would make no difference who had her. She would be dealt with in such a way that she would not be able to win the Brooklyn Handicap or anything else.

He saw that the hoof-prints, which showed plainly on the soft earth and sand, where the grass had been worn away, all turned toward the sea—that is, away from the city.

Ben knew that Stroker had a cottage somewhere in the neighborhood, but was not sure just where. Toward that cottage the mare was being taken, no doubt.

"Thet's ther racket, of course. He'll take Fury to his place, an' if we find her to-morrow and demand her, with Miss Ruth's order, he will say all right, an' we kin hev' her. An' much good it will do us then. No, we must hev' her to-night."

While Ben was thus thinking as he looked over the ground, the others waited for him

to arrive at some conclusion, feeling assured that it would be a wise one, whatever it might be.

But, as it happened, there was no occasion for him to formulate a plan just now.

He lifted up a finger warningly, as he stood at the stable door with the lantern in his hand. Then he hastily blew out the light in the lantern, and pulled Snap and Pat McGlone toward the stable.

"Come inside here and listen," he whispered, in strained tones of intense eagerness.

There was a little moonlight now. The moon was new, and was therefore only a thin crescent, but she gave just enough light to lend a gray tinge to the black darkness, and if one had good eyes, and was to use them carefully, he might have made out a figure standing out in the yard.

It was for this reason that the detective, when he had got his companions into the stable, hugged the doorpost himself, and therefore kept himself out of view.

What was it he had heard? Simply the beat, beat, beat, of a horse's hoofs coming along at a swinging gallop.

"And it's Fury's step, too. I kin sw'ar ter it," he muttered. "I'd know thet little mare's gallop among a hundred."

It may seem strange that Ben could tell the step of the mare from that of any other horse, but horsemen know that there is as much difference between the sound of the footfall of a horse as of a human being, and the detective knew Fury well.

"Oh, come off!" remonstrated Snap. "What guff are yer givin' us about knowing the trotters of that there mule? You're a daisy, you are."

Ben did not reply, but strained his hearing as the beat of the hoofs came nearer.

"Be gob! phwat are they comin' back for, the shpalpeens?" asked Pat, who did not doubt for a moment that the young detective knew what he was talking about, and that it was really Fury that was dashing down the road toward them. "Mebbe they've forgotten some part of the harness or they want ter shtale the shtable dure."

Snap chuckled, but Ben placed his hand sternly over the little fellow's mouth as he whispered:

"Shet up. This is no time ter be giggling."

For a minute longer they listened, as the horse came nearer and nearer, and then, slapping his right fist into the palm of his left hand, Battery Ben exclaimed, emphatically:

"By George! Ther mare's got no one on her back!"

"An' how can yez tell?" asked Pat. "Yez can't see her yet."

"But I know, nevertheless," answered the detective, quietly, as he ran out to the front gate, overlooking the road, and looked out into the darkness.

The mare's hoofbeats were coming nearer and nearer, but there was a bend in the road a hundred yards away, with a thick wood of pines and hemlocks on either side, and it was impossible to see what was coming till the bend was passed.

Ben's eagerness almost made him run up the road, but he reflected that he would not make anything by that move, and he restrained his impatience.

As he made up his mind that the mare must be nearly home, she came into view around the bend, with her mane and tail flying, and riderless, as Battery Ben had declared.

As she neared the gate she saw a dark figure there, and, being unable to distinguish it, she swerved, and, before Ben knew what she was about to do, had cleared the fence in one beautiful, striding leap, and rushed into her stable, narrowly missing Pat McGlone and Snap, who got out of her way only just in time.

CHAPTER X.

THAT AWFUL FACE.

When Ruth Slater and her uncle left the offices of Lenz, Bach & Lenz, so suddenly after the discovery of the murder and the disappearance of the will, they went to the Elevated station at the Brooklyn Bridge and rode up-town to their home on Fifth Avenue. Mathew Slater loved money for

its own sake, and although he had a carriage for his niece, because she insisted upon it, with two saddle horses for her and a strong cob that he used himself, occasionally, he never used any of his own horses when he could avoid it. It was his theory that if a horse was worked too much he would deteriorate in value, and although he admitted that it was equally bad to keep horses in a stable, "eating their heads off," he could not bring himself to use them when he could avoid it, and hence he and his niece were traveling in the malodorous Third Avenue "L" cars, when they might just as well have been in a comfortable carriage but for the sport's penury.

He sat in a corner of the car, hugged together, and seemed to rather enjoy being in the crowd, with all the noise and bustle and discomfort of that wretched mode of traveling as being suited to his humor.

Ruth did not speak to her uncle all the way home. She was thinking, and thinking hard. Mathew watched her from beneath his drooping eyelids, and wondered what was in her mind, but his cowardly conscience would not allow him to ask the question.

Ruth attended a fashionable up-town academy, and she had a governess and companion in the house to assist her in her studies, and to give her any information as to the proper behavior of a rich young girl, who might expect to go into society, and become even the reigning belle of New York in due time.

That she was rich she knew. She also had an idea that her father had made extra provision for her that she would understand when his will was read at the end of the ten years.

Now the will had been read, and she was to have \$100,000, and the house and furniture on Fifth Avenue, but the loss of the will would stop all that, unless her uncle would be willing to admit the existence of the will, in spite of the fact that it was lost. She did not think Mathew Slater was the kind of man to do that, however, and, little as she knew about law, she was aware that there were no witnesses alive in New York now to prove that the will had ever been made. Mr. Lenz, the executor and witness to the will, was dead, and his nephew, young Lenz, another partner in the firm, was in Europe, no one knew where. He was the other witness to the will, she believed, although she was not sure.

"It is strange, and I don't understand it. I will ask Miss Van Corten when I get home. She will give me good advice, I know."

Having got to this stage of reflection, Miss Ruth Slater looked about the car, saw that two or three men were staring at her, and turned to her uncle to ask him what he thought of her taking charge of her mare Fury herself.

Mathew started and looked at her almost threateningly, as he asked, in a grating voice:

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, verily, Mathew, I bethought me that my mare would do better under my own care. Thee knows that I take an interest in racing, and Ben Ward tells me that Fury is entered for the Brooklyn Handicap, but he is not sure that Simon Stroker means her to win."

"Thee knows too much about the track, I fear, Ruth Slater. What have thee to do with such ungodly pursuits as horse-racing?"

"Don't make any difference, unele," answered Ruth, with a toss of her head, as she came back to the everyday style of speaking. "I don't like Simon Stroker, and I don't mean to trust him with my mare. That is all. So I sent Ben Ward up there this morning to get the mare away, and I'm going to keep her at the Hemlocks, near the sea, where I can go up and look at her occasionally."

"You are mad, Ruth."

"Am I? Well, that is good. Some clever people have been mad, you know. Hamlet, for instance."

"Yes, and Ophelia, who was drowned," returned her uncle, gruffly.

"Well, that was better than being hanged—or electrocuted."

Mathew Slater started violently, and scowled.

"Sister Ruth, thee should not converse on matters that thee dost not understand."

At this moment the guard shouted "Fifty-ninth street!" and uncle and niece left the train, and walked briskly across town to their Fifth Avenue home.

"Don't understand, eh, unele?" thought Ruth, as a mischievous smile played about her mouth. "Perhaps I understand more than you think I do."

Dinner was served almost immediately, and as soon as it was over Mathew Slater put on his hat and went out.

"Now, Miss Van Corten, I want you to go out with me," said Ruth, imperiously, but with a smile as soon as she was alone with her companion.

"What a girl you are, Ruth. Where do you want to go now," was the response of the governess, as she stroked the brown hair of the young girl caressingly.

"Down to Mrs. Ward's."

"What, that awful restaurant place near Canal Street, on the Bowery?"

Euphemia Van Corten was a tall, well-dressed woman of about thirty-five, who always looked stylish, no matter what she wore. She belonged to a good Knickerbocker family, and her manners were irreproachable. If there was any weakness in her character, it was her pride in her ancestry. She could trace her descent back two hundred years, and she held that the Van Cortens were the bluest-blooded family that had ever lived on Manhattan Island. Whether she was handsome or not could hardly be determined, because she always wore a pair of large blue glasses.

It was perhaps eight o'clock when Miss Van Corten and Ruth Slater found themselves in a back parlor behind the restaurant on the Bowery, where a good meal could be obtained for fifteen cents and a banquet for a quarter.

Mrs. Ward was a big, fresh-looking woman, with a rich brogue. She was sitting at a table in her parlor, delighted to see the young girl, and somewhat overpowered by the magnificent demeanor of Miss Van Corten.

"Ah, mavourneen, it does the eyes of meself good to gaze on yez, so it does. Faith, since your pure father doied, I've seen yez growing up loike a beautiful flower, so Oi hov'."

"Blarney!" laughed Ruth.

"Indade, an' it isn't. Sure, Oi hov' not the stringth to talk blarney now, for thot b'ye ov mine do be hovin' me always distr'ied with his blatherin's an' his smatterin's, an' his rinning afther the horses, so he hez."

"Is your health poor, Mrs. Ward?" asked Miss Van Corten, icily.

"Savin' ye'r prisince, it's me shtomach, an' me head, an' me limbs, they're all wake—so wake Oi can hardly git around, so Oi can't. Ah, indade, it's meself thot's a pure, weak cr'ature."

At this moment there was a noise in the restaurant, and Mrs. Ward looked up hastily, and glanced out into the other room.

A drunken fellow, weighing over two hundred pounds, a 'longshoreman, apparently, and as strong as a bull, had refused to pay for his supper, and was holding a waiter in each hand, threatening to knock their heads together. The waiters were good-sized men, but they were helpless in the hands of the gigantic 'longshoreman.

Ruth clung to Miss Van Corten in terror, when Mrs. Ward, rising from her seat, walked into the restaurant to straighten matters.

Biff! Bang! Slap! Crash!

These four words represented a blow from Mrs. Ward's ponderous fists, first one and then the other. The 'longshoreman was lying on the floor, looking up in surprise and discomfiture at the good-natured landlady, as she stood over him with her fists clinched, and a flush in her cheeks that added to her good looks.

"Git up, yez dhirty coward, or Oi'll shlap yez against the ceiling, and thin woipe down the walls wid yez, so Oi wull!" exclaimed Mrs. Ward, as she threatened him with her fist. "Yez t'ought yez c'u'd come in her an' chate a pure widder woman, did yez? Yez thought there warn't no one ter take care uv me

'cause me son wuz away, did yez? Oi'll tache yez manners, so Oi wull. Pay fer your supper, you shpalpeen."

The 'longshoreman sat up on the floor and pulled out a quarter, which he offered humbly to Mrs. Ward. She snatched the quarter from him and threw it carelessly to one of the waiters, who caught it and put it in the till.

"Now, git up, 'fore Oi knock the dhirty head aff yez."

The big man was so astonished that he did not move for an instant. Mrs. Ward seized him by the collar of his coat, lifted him half-way up, and dropped him heavily on the floor. She repeated this process two or three times, banging him down harder each time, while the other people in the restaurant laughed with the greatest enjoyment.

The 'longshoreman seemed to be helpless in the hands of this good-natured looking Irishwoman, who was not remarkably big, but who seemed to be as strong as Sandow and as active as Jim Corbett.

She gave the fellow one more hearty bang on the floor, and then, lifting him to his feet, gave him a slap and a kick at the same instant that sent him flying through the open door into the middle of the Bowery.

Then she came in and sat down in the parlor.

"I'm a wake, pure body," she sighed. "But when Oi see anything loike thot, Oi hov' ter exert meself just a little, ye see."

"You are very strong, Mrs. Ward," observed Miss Van Corten.

"Not now. I wuz the strong woman wid Barnum's show fer two years, an' Oi used ter put on the gloves wid all comers, too. Oi wuz purty cliver as a boxer in thim days, but Oi'm no good now."

Miss Van Corten had her own ideas about whether Mrs. Ward was good as a pugilist or not, but she did not say anything.

"Mrs. Ward, I want you to go with me to the offices of Lenz, Bach & Lenz," said Ruth. "You have the keys, haven't you?"

"Yis, Oi hov', ginerally, but Oi haven't got thim to-night, on acconut of the murder. The police hov' been examining the place, ye know. But Oi'll hov' the kays to-morrow."

Ruth was a little disappointed, but she said that to-morrow would do as well, and the Irishwoman insisted upon both the ladies drinking a cup of tea that she had made specially in her own teapot.

"Av coorse Oi wouldn't ask yez ter dhrink what Oi give the people in the restaurant beyant, ye know," she said, in a matter-of-fact way.

Ruth sat quietly, sipping her tea, thinking. Suddenly she started up and declared:

"I must go to those offices to-night."

"Ruth," said Miss Van Corten, in a remonstrative tone.

"Yes," returned the girl, defiantly. "I am going to know something about the murder of poor Mr. Lenz and what has become of that will before I sleep. If you don't want to come with me, I'll go alone."

She walked swiftly out into the restaurant, and seemed as if she would go out into the Bowery and walk down town right away.

Mrs. Ward and Miss Van Corten were by her side, however, before she could reach the street.

Without another word they walked on each side of the young girl, at a good swift pace, toward the lower part of Broadway. It was a busy time in the evening, and no one took any particular notice of them as they went down the Bowery and Park Row, and past the big newspaper offices to the building in which were the offices of Lenz, Bach & Lenz.

There was a newspaper printed in the building, but they took no notice of the editors and reporters that they met on the stairway. A few words with the night watchman, and they walked up the stairs to the tenth floor. The elevators had stopped running, and there was nothing for it but to climb at that time in the evening.

The watchman had a key of the room, and, knowing that Mrs. Ward had charged

of the rooms, he opened them without hesitation, the more so that he recognized in Miss Van Corten and Ruth two ladies of the rich set of New York, who had always been treated with deference by the lawyers whenever they had appeared in the building.

"There's the offices, ladies, but of course all traces of the murder have been removed, and Mr. Lenz's body is at the undertaker's. He was a bachelor, and lived alone, you know."

The watchman gave this information in a respectful manner, and then, having turned on one of the incandescent lamps in the outer office, withdrew. He had an interesting story in his newspaper, and he was anxious to go down to the lower hall, where he was accustomed to sit by the side of the elevators and read. He was a quiet man, who believed in doing his simple duty and not troubling himself about affairs of other people.

Ruth did not answer the watchman. She was too much interested in what she was about to do. She had made up her mind that she must find out something about the murder, and she had an idea that when she discovered the murderer she would at the same time place her hand upon the will. It was not that she cared so much about the money, although she realized that \$100,000 was a great deal of money, but she could not bear the mystery.

The inner office, where she and her uncle had sat with Mr. Lenz and listened to the reading of the will only a few hours before, was closed and fastened with a latch of peculiar make.

Ruth went to open it, but it was too much for her.

"Let me show yez. That lock was bought by Mr. Lenz himself. He was a strange mon, an' he didn't want ter hov' people comin' in upon him without warnin', so he didn't," said Mrs. Ward.

She put her hand to the lock, and with a slight twist, it clicked back, and the door swung open.

At the same instant Ruth gave a shriek of indescribable horror.

As the light of the outer office penetrated the inner room in one narrow shaft, she saw, at the end of that shaft, the face of her uncle, Mathew Slater, the eyes glaring, and a great streak of blood across his sallow cheek.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SECRET TRAP.

For only an instant was the face visible.

As Ruth uttered the shriek the incandescent light behind her went out and the rooms were in utter darkness.

Ruth clung to Miss Van Corten convulsively, while a sob that she could not repress escaped her.

"What is the matter, my dear. There is nothing to be frightened at. The lamp has burned out, as lamps often do. You know that," said the governess, reassuringly. Adding, to Mrs. Ward, "Mrs. Ward, can't you find another lamp?"

For answer the Irishwoman turned up another lamp, and Ruth, in deadly fear, looked toward the spot at which she had seen that familiar, and yet unnatural, face of her uncle.

It was gone.

"Oh, Miss Van Corten, I saw it," gasped Ruth. "Could it have been his—his—wraith?"

"Nonsense!"

"But I saw it, I tell you."

Ruth was naturally a girl of strong nerves, and now, by a supreme effort of will, she went into that terrible inner office and looked all over it at one hasty glance. It was empty!

For a moment Ruth Slater stood with her gaze fixed upon the face of her governess, wondering what it could mean.

"I saw it," she repeated, mechanically. "I saw it as plainly as I see you and Mrs. Ward."

"Och, now, listen to th' purty dear. Sure when a girl thinks a thing, she wouldn't give it up for Malachi's ghost, so she wouldn't."

Ruth Slater was not to be persuaded against her own vision by this kind of talk. She knew that she had seen Mathew Slater's face, and she was sure that he must be somewhere about, even now.

"I'm here and I intend to find out all I can," she declared, resolutely. "There was a will, that I heard read, and it disappeared when Mr. Lenz was murdered. I mean to find that will, or the murderer of Mr. Lenz, or both."

The careless young girl had been converted into the determined woman, and there could be no doubt that she would carry out her intentions to the best of her ability.

"Och, faith, me darlint, the perlice hov' been around here an' taken everything out that might lead to the findin' out uv the murderer."

"The police don't know everything," was Ruth's short reply, and with this bit of undeniable philosophy, she began to examine the room attentively in all quarters.

There was not much to examine, after all. There was the big rolltop desk, that was now closed and locked, two light cane chairs, and the revolving office chair, that had been occupied by Mr. Lenz when he was reading the will. Then there was the sofa against the wall, with its lumber of old books that had been all pulled out and pushed back by the police, and that was all.

One window looked out upon Broadway, ten floors from the street, and there was no possibility of persons having come in or gone out that way, unless they could fly.

Miss Van Corten had taken the revolving chair, and was watching the movements of the girl with languid interest, and Mrs. Ward stood, nursing her elbows, and waiting for the search to end.

"This sofa seems to be fastened to the floor," said Ruth, as she vainly tried to tug it away from the wall.

"No, alanna! Don't yez see all thim big books under there, thot hold it in place? Phwat's the good uv thryin' ter lug thot out? Yez can see undher it, can't yez?"

But Ruth was not satisfied, and she went down on her knees, took off her hat, and thrust her head, with its tangle of pretty brown hair, under the sofa, among the dusty books.

Suddenly she looked out and held up a warning finger.

"Phwat is it, me darlint?"

"Hush!"

Ruth laid her cheek flat upon the carpet and listened.

"Verily, that was a narrow escape," she heard a voice that she recognized as her uncle's, say slowly.

Where did the voice come from? It seemed to her that it was right in her ear, but certainly there was no one under the sofa.

She felt about the carpet under the sofa with her hand, hardly knowing why, when her finger struck the top of a nail sticking out of the carpet. Involuntarily she pressed it, and was immediately conscious of its sinking under the pressure.

Ruth had not had much experience with secret traps in floors and other devices that are much commoner in New York than the public suspects, but she felt sure that the top of this old nail was the key to a mystery.

She was about to pursue her investigations further when she reflected that she would not like Miss Van Corten to know all that was to be learned of family secrets, in spite of her love for her governess.

"It is plain that there is a way through here somewhere, and I want to find out what it is, but I must find out alone."

"Be jabbers, I forgot to lock up the room below, so Oi did, to-day. Phwat with the worry an' throuble of this murder, an' all the excitement. Oi didn't know phwat I wuz doin', so Oi didn't."

As the Irishwoman spoke she turned hastily to the floor below.

"You go with her, Miss Van Corten. These offices are worth seeing as specimens of modern New York. I want to

look a little further about this room. I shall be here till you come back."

Miss Van Corten smiled, and shrugged her shoulders, as if she had little faith in Ruth's investigations. Then she followed Mrs. Ward. She liked to see all there was to see, and Ruth's determination to hunt about the room in which a murder had been committed only a few hours before rather tired her.

As soon as they had gone Ruth tried once more to move the lounge away from the wall. It was firmly fixed.

Then she stooped under it and pressed the nail with all her force. As she did so a large section of the floor, carpet and all swung aside noiselessly, leaving a hole two and a half feet square.

A glare of light came up through the hole, and as Ruth looked through it, her gaze fell upon the will.

There was the paper that meant \$100,000 to her, as well as the mansion on Fifth Avenue, with its treasures of art and luxury that thousands of people in New York that night envied to possess.

For an instant the light and the sudden revelation dazed the young girl, and she could not understand how it was that she was actually looking at the paper that had so mysteriously disappeared. Then, in a flash, everything became clear to her, and she realized that her father's brother, Mathew Slater, was a murderer and a thief, and that if any one else knew what she knew at that moment, he would be in the Tombs before he was an hour older.

Mathew Slater was standing immediately under an incandescent lamp with the will spread open in his hands, and he was looking at it intently, as if trying to remember every word when the paper should have passed from his possession.

Ruth shuddered as she saw that there was a large patch of blood on the sheet, that was hardly dry, and that her uncle's hand was also stained with it, and that he wiped his hot face with his hand from time to time.

"That is how the blood came on his face," thought Ruth. "Oh, it is horrible!"

"So, this is the will, verily. Now, friend Slyme, I will keep from the public ear the crime that thou hast committed, in consideration of the service thou hast been and may be to me."

Ruth started. She had not seen any one else in the room, and it surprised her to hear her uncle talking to some one else.

The building was what is called "fire-proof," and there was only a small space between the iron ceiling of the room below and the floor of the upper apartment. The space between was stuffed with asbestos. When the space was disclosed by the movement of the portion of flooring, it took with it the asbestos and the iron ceiling altogether. The ceiling was laid out in panels, and the joint, therefore, did not show. But the thickness of the piece made it difficult for the girl to see all over the room, and it was this that prevented her seeing the companion of Mathew Slater at first.

Now she could see that there was a big, roughly attired man sitting carelessly in a chair, watching Mathew Slater, and that it was none other than the 'long-shoreman that Mrs. Ward had so unceremoniously thrown out of the restaurant that evening.

"So thee thinks she does not suspect thee?" asked Mathew.

"Not a bit of it. I went in there and pretended to be drunk, and the landlady threw me out as easily as if I had been a baby. My, what a muscle she has."

"Never mind about that, friend Slyme. That does not interest me. What did my niece do?"

"She came out of the place a little while afterward with Mrs. Ward and that stiff party that you call her governess. They came to this building, and they are up-stairs now."

"I know that," said Mathew, curtly. "Now, you'd better get out of the way."

It wouldn't be well for you to be found around here, after the murder of that poor old man. I didn't think you would have done it. Some things even I might do, but murder—oh! It makes me shiver. If my poor niece only knew it, I am doing everything for her sake, but, thank Heaven, I have no crime on my soul, and if I had killed a man I should pray to be executed without trial. My dear Ruth, thee little thinks what thy poor uncle is going through for thy sake!"

He took out a newspaper from his pocket and wrote a few words on the margin, and handed it to Slyme.

"There are your directions. Follow them!"

The big 'longshoreman looked at the paper, put it in his pocket, and without a word left the room. As he did so, Mathew looked at the door and murmured:

"What a villain! I wonder whether they will ever find out that he killed Emil Lenz."

Ruth closed the trap. Could it be possible that she had suspected her uncle wrongfully of the terrible crime of murder? As for the will, that was comparatively nothing, she thought. Her poor uncle! Perhaps he really was doing everything for her good, after all.

As the trap closed, Mathew, who had been standing still, looking at the door, turned his eyes upward toward the place where the trap had been open a moment before, and observed, with a grin spreading all over his sallow face:

"My dear little Ruth, you shouldn't listen to conversations that are not intended for you, and you should never spy on your uncle. I suppose the poor child thought I didn't know she was there. Um! What fools young girls are. I shall have to explain this will business somehow. Well, I'll do it. That fellow Slyme is useful, and I have him in my power, now that I know the tricks he has been up to in New York and elsewhere, and how the police would like to take him. Ah, well! The virtuous are always cared for! Thank Heaven, I am a good man!"

He turned up his washed-out eyes, and looked so sanctimonious and hypocritical, that it would have done Pat McGlone good to see him.

"Now for Coney Island," he continued. "Ruth has taken that mare, I am told, and I cannot allow that. Badger must win the Brooklyn Handicap, and bring me in the \$50,000 I have staked on that, or I am afraid I shall find myself in a bad hole, even with the \$100,000 that belonged to Ruth, and that is so nearly gone. Stroker is a sharp man, too, and I have to watch myself with him. I think I have enough trouble on my mind just now."

As he uttered these last words, there came a tremendous banging at the door.

CHAPTER XII.

A VOICE FROM THE GRAVE.

As the banging came at the door, Slater turned out the incandescent light and listened.

He could hear the voices of men outside in the hall, mingled with the tones of Mrs. Ward, who was evidently excited.

"Sure, Oi tell yez Oi saw the shpalpeen come out uv the room, so Oi did. He's a thafe uv th' wurld, ez throid ter git his shupper fer nothin', an' now he's up to some more diviltry, so he is."

Then there were a rattling at the door and some more observations by Mrs. Ward, that indicated that she was searching for her passkey.

Ruth stood at her elbow, trembling with excitement.

"I suppose it is only my uncle in here, Mrs. Ward," she said, quietly. "You know this is his office, and maybe he has some business to attend to down here."

It was one of the contradictory peculiarities of the girl that although she had felt that she could give her uncle up to justice if he deserved it, when she left the house on Fifth Avenue, now that there seemed some likelihood of his get-

ting into trouble, she was willing to defend him.

"Faith, my darlint, if he's in his own offices, Oi hov' nothin' to say. But, be gob, Oi t'ink he'd open the dure if he wuz insioide. Then Oi saw thot t'ief of the wurld come out, an' Oi do be thinkin' all is not roight."

It was at this moment that Mr. Snipero, commonly known as Snap, bustled up the stairs, and demanded to know what "all d'is chinnin' is about."

"None of yure business. This ain't yure offices, so it ain't. Phwat's d'e throuble wi'd yez?"

Mrs. Ward was not disposed to allow Snap to take charge of matters in this peremptory way, and she was only doing what she considered due to her dignity in shutting him off.

"Well, now, don't git cheesey, Mrs. Ward. I ain't no gilly, not ter know what's due ter a loidy. I beg ye'r pardon if I done anything what hurts yer feelings."

This handsome apology mollified Mrs. Ward, and she condescended to explain that she was about to enter this office to see that everything was all right, when she heard a noise and saw a light within, and immediately afterward a man that she had seen a little while before, drunk, at her restaurant had come out of the room, nearly knocking her down, and had run down the stairs.

"That's the mug as I see when I was comin' up, sure," observed Snap. "I didn't like the look of him, an' I set him down for a guff right away."

It may be explained here that "guff" is Bowery for "no good."

Hardly had Snap expressed this opinion when Mrs. Ward opened the door and turned up a light inside.

The room was empty. "That's jist what Oi thought," said Mrs. Ward, as she looked around her. "That thief of the wurld was makin' all the noise, and when he heard us outside, shure he made a run for it, an' Oi wuz fool enough ter let him go, so Oi wuz."

The janitor of the building, who had been attracted by the noise, called upstairs to know what was the matter, but Mrs. Ward peremptorily requested him to attend to his own business, and he came up on the run, to demand what it all meant.

"It manes that you let all kinds of quare characters come in this building at noight, an' thot there is a feller jist gone out who ought to hov' been shtopped, so he ought."

"Where's Mr. Slater?" demanded the janitor.

"Faith, how should Oi know?" "He came up these stairs a little while ago, and I haven't seen him go down."

"Och, sure, there's lots of things that you don't see," answered Mrs. Ward, contemptuously, for she had but little use for janitors in general, and this one in particular.

"I tell you that Mr. Slater must be in that room," insisted the janitor.

"Oh, tumble off ye'r perch, an' break yer jaw," interrupted Snap. "D'yer think no one hez any eyes but you. I should have piped him off if he's gone out, an' I tell yer there ain't no one gone out of here since I come. See?"

Ruth stood quietly, wondering what it could all mean. That Mathew Slater had been in the room she knew by the evidence of her own eyes, and she was quite sure that he could not have come out by the door to the hallway without being seen by Mrs. Ward and Miss Van Corten, and the others who had been outside the door for the last ten minutes.

She felt a shiver of apprehension that was almost superstition as she looked into the room and tried to understand what she had seen and heard.

She looked up to the place in the ceiling where she knew that the hole was, but which showed no sign, now that it was closed. She knew that he could not have left the room in that way, even if the hole were open, for a step-ladder that she perceived half hidden in a shallow closet was evidently the means he used to communicate with the hole in the ceiling,

and it would have been impossible for him to put the ladder where it was now, if he had gone out of the room by the ceiling.

Why the trap was there she did not know, but in these mysterious office buildings there were many things she could not understand.

As she stood wondering, after the janitor had gone down-stairs, and Snap and Mrs. Ward were looking curiously about the room, she was startled by a voice behind her, saying, in well-known accents:

"Verily, Ruth, thou art in a strange occupation, coming to an office building at night, and penetrating into my room without any apparent object."

She turned quickly, to perceive her uncle, Mathew Slater, standing in the doorway, with a smile on his sallow face, as if he were enjoying the discomfiture of his niece and her companions. She was rejoiced to see that there was no mark of blood on his face, and that he looked clean and neat, as he generally did, notwithstanding that he always wore the habiliments of the Society of Friends.

"Well, if this ain't the coldest deal I ever see," observed Snap, under his breath.

"I—I thought you were here, uncle," said Ruth, falteringly.

"Why, Ruth, thee must be wandering in thy mind," remonstrated Mathew, mildly. "I was walking quietly along Broadway for a constitutional, when the janitor stepped out and told me thou wert here, and I came up to see what thou wert doing."

Ruth could not say anything. She had actually seen him in that room not fifteen minutes ago, with the will in his hand, and had heard his directions to the 'longshoreman Slyme, and now he was denying that he had ever been in the room, with the apparent proof of his words by his being outside, without any known means of his having got out without being seen.

"Now, go home, Ruth. I may not be home to-night. I have some business. Well, I may tell thee what it is. I am going to Coney Island to look after thy little mare Fury. Thee has given it into the care of the young man, Ben Ward—Battery Ben—and I do not care to trust him altogether."

"Och, yez don't, eh, Mr. Shlater, don't yez? Well, then, it's his mither ez is tellin' yez thot yez couldn't thrust a better b'ye. Indade, Oi'd loike to know why me b'ye couldn't be thrust, so Oi w'u'd."

Mrs. Ward was generally respectful to Mathew Slater, although she didn't like him, but when he talked about her son in anything but the kindest way, it was time for her mother-love to assert itself, and it did, at once.

Mathew Slater took no notice of the good woman's remonstrance, but went on quietly:

"So I'm going up to the Brighton Beach stable to look at the mare and see that it is all right."

"There is no occasion, uncle. Battery Ben will take every care of Fury."

"Thru fer yez, me darlint. It's ye'rself thot knows a good b'ye whin yez sees him, so ye does," put in Mrs. Ward, with a gratified smile.

"Besides," went on Ruth, "I—I—have taken Fury away from Brighton Beach and entirely out of Simon Stroker's hands, and Ben has the mare at—at—my house at Coney Island—the Hemlocks."

There flashed across the face of Mathew Slater an expression that combined hate and fury in one sweeping cloud, as he realized that his niece was thinking and acting for herself, regardless of his wishes, but he swallowed it down, as he said, as softly as he could:

"I do not think thee is wise. Thy uncle would have taken care of the mare, and seen that she was in fit condition to enter the Brooklyn Handicap. Thee knows she is already entered for it, and that if she wins, it will mean a great deal of money for thee."

"I don't care about the money. You don't suppose that I am in the business of horseracing for money, do you, uncle? I mean Fury to race because I am proud of her. That is all."

Ruth was perplexed. She had come out with the full intention of learning something about the will that gave her so much money and property, and now that she knew who had the will, and that her uncle was aware of the identity of the murderer, even if he had not committed it himself, she could do nothing but go home again.

"Well, Oi want to close this office. Do yez want to shtay here any longer, Mr. Sblater?"

"Yes. Thee can go. I will close the room when I have written a letter."

"Say, Mr. Slater, what d'yer think of d'is here murder, anyhow. You ain't got no objections ter sayin' a word about it, have yer?"

Snap squared himself up to Slater like a little sparrow, and put his head on one side as if anxious not to lose a word of the answer.

Mathew looked around—for he was already seated at his rolltop desk, which he had opened—and said good-by to his niece, who, with Miss Van Corten and Mrs. Ward, was at the top of the staircase outside, and took no notice of Snap.

"Say, look here, Mr. Slater, you can't bluff me in d'is way. I ain't no gilly, an' I don't allow no mugs, wheder d'ey are rich or poor, to bluff me. I asked you what you know about d'is murder and d'is will. See? I ain't very big, but I'm more d'an seven, an' don't you forgit it. Mr. Lenz was a good bloke, an' I'd go t'rough a good deal ter find out who slugged him ter-day. See? Now, what do you know about de case?"

"Get out, friend Snipero, or I shall have to lay violent hands on thee," answered Mathew, whose pale face was a few shades whiter, or rather yellower.

"Well, now, I tell yer, d'is here bluff don't go, an' I don't propose ter have it."

Mathew looked through the open doorway, and saw that the three women had disappeared. Then he arose from his chair, closed the door, locked it, and resumed his seat, with the ugly smile still on his face.

Snap watched him curiously, as he brushed his Derby hat carefully, with his lips set in a straight line of determination.

"Now, Mr. Slater, I ask yer ag'in, what do yer know about d'is case? But I warn yer d'at anything you may say may be used ag'in yer. I'm readin' law, an' I know how ter handle d'ese yer t'ings. I have certain information d'at leads me ter suppose d'at you know somet'ing about d'is here case."

He folded his arms, and looked steadfastly into the face of Slater, who was leaning back in his chair, with that curious smile still playing about his mouth.

"Do yer hear what I say?" demanded Snap.

Suddenly the bony hands of Mathew Slater were on his throat, and as the little fellow was borne backward, Slater forced his knee into the boy's chest and tightened his grip on his throat.

"You little insignificant rat," hissed Mathew Slater. "You will come into a gentleman's office and insult him, will you? I'll crush you to death. It would be the proper thing to do."

Snap managed to loosen the sport's hand enough to get his breath for a moment and to gasp:

"Oh, come off! Take ye'r dukes out of my neck!"

"Why shouldn't I choke you to death? What right have you to live?" demanded Mathew, holding the boy's throat, but not too tightly for him to breathe.

"I have as much right as any mug as would kill an old man. That's what!" returned the undaunted Snap.

"You miserable whelp! Then you mean to say that I am a—a—"

It seemed as if Slater could not get the word out, and the boy grinned, as if he understood why the man hesitated.

"Yes, I mean ter say that you are a mur—"

The grip of Slater tightened on the lad's throat, and he was turning black in the face when another voice supplied the word clearly and distinctly:

"Murderer!"

The voice was the voice of Emil Lenz,

who had been found dead in his office only a few hours before.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT MATHEW HEARD AND SAW.

When the mare disappeared from the stable at the Hemlocks and dashed up the road Rodney sat upon her back.

There were several reasons for this arrangement. One was that Jim Rodney was a light weight, and was a professional jockey, and another was that Stroker and Slater each had a bicycle, and were accustomed to that mode of locomotion.

So, with Rodney clinging closely to the saddle, and Slater and Stroker keeping well at his side, the mare made good time up the road in the darkness, and it was an easy thing to elude the vigilance of Battery Ben and his friends.

They had gone about a quarter of a mile before any one spoke. Each was occupied with his own thoughts. Rodney was grumbling to himself over the trouble he was having, without any immediate prospect of pay adequate to the risk and labor. Stroker was worried over the mare, and wondering whether he would be able to fix things so that his big horse Badger could win the Brooklyn Handicap, and, later in the year, the precious Futurity Stakes. Slater was thinking about many things. He was trying to understand what that ghostly voice in the office had meant—that voice of the dead lawyer, calling him a murderer, which had frightened him so that he had released Snap and rushed from the office as soon as he could recover any of his equanimity. Then he was thinking of the thump he had received in the vaudeville booth in the Coney Island Bowery, and from that his reflections wandered to the will that he had buried in the garden of the Hemlocks, at the foot of the tall poplar, and he wondered if it was still safe. He made up his mind that it could not be allowed to remain there, but that he must take it away at the first opportunity.

"Yea, verily. The Philistines will be upon me, I fear!"

He spoke these words audibly, in the intensity of his feeling over the matter without being aware of it.

"What's that you are whining about?" broke in Stroker, roughly.

"Nothing, friend Stroker."

The mare had dropped to a quiet trot, and the two wheelmen were jogging along without much exertion, but Mathew Slater's words seemed to come in jerks, as if it were an effort to speak.

"You'll have to fix it with Ruth, if she makes any trouble about this," observed Stroker, carelessly.

"Verily, if thou wilt try to please the maiden, all will be well. Thee knows it is the dearest wish of my heart to see thee the husband of my niece. It will settle all difficulties, and give thee a rich wife at the same time."

Stroker's only answer was a grunt, as he pedaled a little faster on his wheel.

Mathew, whose sinews were like steel, easily kept up with his big companion, and he whispered, insinuatingly:

"Thee knows, friend Stroker, that the maiden has a goodly sum in stocks and bonds that no one can touch but herself unless she chose to give something to her husband."

Stroker made a sudden turn on his wheel that brought him right across the path of his companion, so that both stopped in the middle of the roadway, as he said in low, but perfectly distinct tones:

"Ruth Slater has a million dollars in her own right, now, and the Hemlocks, and Fury, hasn't she?"

"Thee knows she has, friend Stroker."

"Yes, and by her father's will she is to have \$100,000, that are in some safe deposit company's vaults; the house on Fifth Avenue, near Central Park, that you are living in, with all the furniture, bric-a-brac, and other things in it."

The Fifth Avenue Sport was a good wheelman, and when he had been stopped by Stroker he had turned the front wheel so that he could sit on the machine without falling, notwithstanding that it was standing still. But, at these words of Simon Stroker, he trembled so that he

actually dropped off, and only just got his foot to the ground in time to prevent an ignominious spill.

Stroker laughed.

"What's the matter, Mathew? You'd better take lessons at a riding school."

"The wheel struck a stone, that's all."

"Oh, that's all, is it?" repeated Stroker, mockingly, as he looked closely into the face of his companion by the light of the moon, that had now risen high in the sky. "I thought you did not like what I was saying."

"Why shouldn't I like it?" demanded Mathew, with an air of bravado. "Of course, it is nonsense, and you are only saying it in a joke, so I don't mind it."

In his agitation he forgot his "thees" and "thous," as he generally did under such circumstances.

"It's not a joke, and you know it," returned Stroker, in cold, hard tones. "You know that the will made the provisions that I told you, and you know that you have spent most of that \$100,000, and that you killed—"

"Hush!" whispered Mathew, as he passed his hand across his clammy forehead. "Remember that we are on a public road, and that we don't know who may be among those trees by our side."

"What's the matter? I didn't say anything, did I? Only that you killed—"

"Hush!"

"Killed—time when you were loafing in that variety show last night," laughed Stroker.

"I thought you meant—something else," gasped Mathew.

Stroker's manner changed suddenly to one of deep ferocity as he leaned over toward Mathew (for they were speeding along the road by this time, only a few yards behind Fury, who was trotting steadily) and hissed in his ear:

"I do mean something else. I know just what took place in old Lenz's office yesterday afternoon, and I could send you to Sing Sing, and to something worse even than a prison cell, if I were to tell what I was told by—"

"By whom?" gasped Mathew.

At this instant a wild, unearthly shriek rang out of the dark wood they were passing, and, at the same moment, Fury reared up on her hind legs, then darted forward and backward, and threw Jim Rodney far over her head.

The shriek was repeated, but even through that awful sound Mathew Slater could hear the name "Emil Lenz!" as if uttered by some monster from the very bowels of the earth.

The moon disappeared behind a thick cloud, leaving the scene in black darkness, and as a distant roll of thunder echoed behind the thick woods, a flick of lightning showed Mathew Slater the mare plunging wildly about the road, and Rodney's white face turned up to the sky, looking like that of a corpse.

Mathew drew himself together in an agony of superstitious terror, as he tried to make out what had become of Simon Stroker, who seemed to have disappeared altogether. Then a flash of lightning, much more distinct and fierce than the first, showed him Stroker vainly trying to hold the mare quiet by the bridle.

"Curse this horse! Where are you, Mathew?" shouted Stroker, who was not troubled with superstitious fears, but was decidedly anxious about the mare. "She'll get away from me."

Mathew shook off the creeping feeling of awe that had held him in its thrall for a few moments, and ran forward to help Stroker with Fury.

He was too late. Fury had her own notions of what was due to a self-respecting mare, and when she saw Mathew coming toward her, as she did in a new flash of lightning, the lightning and Mathew together were too much for her nerves, and she tore herself loose from Stroker, and dashed at the top of her speed down the road up which she had just come. How she reached the Hemlocks the reader knows already.

"After her, Mathew! We can't let her get away!" yelled Stroker.

But Mathew did not respond to the enthusiasm of his companion. It was im-

portant to him, as well as to Stroker, to get possession of the mare, and he knew that if it was not done now it might be almost impossible afterward, in view of Ruth's expressed intention to come down to the Hemlocks to look after her favorite personally. But that awful shriek, and the way Emil Lenz seemed to haunt him, were too much for Mathew's nerves at present, and he would not have gone down that dark road again after the mare or to the vicinity of that poplar for twice the \$100,000 that he hoped to make if he could prevent Fury becoming the winner of the Brooklyn Handicap and other racing events for which she was entered.

"What the bloomin' dickens is the matter?" inquired a feeble voice at this juncture, and as the flashes of lightning became more frequent, accompanied by thunder and some big drops of rain, Mathew saw Jim Rodney staggering about the road, trying to understand what had happened to him.

Stroker had gone down the road some distance after the mare, without waiting to see whether Mathew would follow him or not, and Rodney shook himself like a wet spaniel, as he looked inquiringly at Mathew and again asked what it meant.

"The mare threw thee, James," said Mathew, in a tone as much like that he ordinarily used as possible.

"Just like everything in this 'ere blarsted country! A man is allers a gittin' throwed, or kicked, or 'ammered, or some-thin'. I'm a goin' back to the hold country as soon as I can get out of this 'ere business. I'm tired of messin' about 'ere, makin' nothin'."

This was a regular growl of Rodney's, and meant nothing at all. He had done well since he had been in America, riding in races in the season and acting as trainer and stableman at other times. He was not over-scrupulous, and there was hardly a trick in horse-trading or horse-racing that he did not know.

"Where is Mr. Stroker's place?" asked Mathew, ignoring Rodney's complaints.

"Jist up 'ere a little ways, an' I lay a bob there ain't a bloomin' bit of cheese or bread or a mug of beer in the w'ole place," grumbled Rodney.

"What you want more than anything else is sleep, friend Rodney."

Jim Rodney did not condescend to answer, but seeing the silver-handled crop lying in the road where he had dropped it when he had been thrown from the mare's back, he picked it up, and plodded up the road, with Mathew riding quietly by his side.

Mathew had tried to shake off the horror that he felt when he heard those wild shrieks, through which he could distinguish the cry "Emil Lenz" in response to his inquiry as to who had told Simon Stroker something, and he had pretty well succeeded, in listening to Jim Rodney's matter-of-fact complaints against his hard luck. So he was only anxious to get to Stroker's cottage, and retire for a few hours' rest.

"'Ere's the place," suddenly remarked Rodney, as they stopped in a particularly dark part of the road, that even the occasional flashes of lightning seemed unable to illuminate, while the increasing rain was beginning to make them both uncomfortably damp.

Mathew could not see anything but the trees at first, but as Rodney stepped to the side of the road, he saw that there was a narrow bridle-path between two thick groves of poplars and hemlocks, that led apparently into the heart of the wood.

He rode in on his wheel close behind Rodney, and after traveling about twenty yards, the path swung sharply around to the left, and a house came into view, as black and dark as anything else in the neighborhood.

The neighing of a horse, accompanied by a stamping that betokened uneasiness in the stable, was a familiar sound that did Mathew good, and he was almost comfortable as Rodney let him in at a side door and led him into a large room, comfortably furnished with chairs, a sofa, tables and other articles that would be found in any homelike dining-room.

A gas-jet had been turned low in the

dining-room, and Rodney turned it up with the air of one who was at home in the place.

"Where is Simon Stroker, dost thee think, friend Rodney?" said Mathew.

"'Ow the bloomin' deuce should I know where 'e is? 'E'll come back like a bad shilin', don't you fear."

"Do you think he is bad? Well, I don't think he is very good myself," said Mathew, insinuatingly, who had suddenly conceived the idea that it might be well to have Rodney on his side against Stroker if there should ever be a rupture.

But he reckoned without his host, for Rodney turned on him fiercely, and demanded:

"Who says he ain't good? 'E's better than any one as talks about him. That's w'ot he is. No one can tell me nothin' 'bout Mister Stroker, I don't care w'ho he is."

Mathew instantly understood that Jim Rodney was like a great many other people who will not allow any one to abuse their friends or employers but themselves. But he had something else to engage his attention besides Rodney's idiosyncrasies. For on glancing toward the window, that was unshaded by a blind, and looked out upon the darkness of the night, he saw something that made his hair actually stand up under his broad-brimmed hat.

It was the face of a man, white, and with a streak of something dark across the cheek that looked like blood, and the eyes were staring straight into the room with a vacant expression that was too horrible for Mathew Slater.

With a shriek of wild terror, he fell forward in a deathlike swoon.

CHAPTER XIV.

A TRIAL GALLOP.

"Come out here, Rod, and help me!" shouted Simon Stroker's voice.

Rodney had run forward when Slater fell, to see what was the matter with him, but as he heard Stroker calling him, he contented himself with turning Slater over on his back and loosening his collar and necktie and leaving him to recover, while he (Rodney) went out to attend to Simon Stroker's wants.

"You lazy cuss! Why didn't you come down the road with me to chase that mare?" demanded Stroker, as he gave his wheel to Rodney to bring into the house, while he shook some of the rain out of his hair and wiped the streak of red mud from his face. He looked ruefully at his silk hat in the light which streamed from the window, and saw that the article was completely ruined by the rain.

Rodney did not answer. He followed Stroker into the house, after bringing in both the bicycles, and stirred up the fire that he had started in the kitchen range as soon as he had entered with Mathew Slater.

Mathew was sitting up on the floor, looking about him in such comical bewilderment that Stroker laughed, in spite of his vexation over losing the mare Fury.

"What's the matter, Mathew?" he asked.

The sport did not answer. He could not say anything, for he felt that he would never be able to talk rationally until the daylight came to sweep away the supernatural atmosphere in which he seemed to have been living ever since he had heard Emil Lenz's voice call him a murderer in his own office in Broadway in the evening.

Simon Stroker was a philosopher in his way, and he had made up his mind that as nothing could be done toward obtaining possession of the mare for the present it would be well to make himself comfortable and get some sleep.

The house was well supplied with bedrooms, as well as with a good larder, and he knew they could be comfortable enough for that night, and for as long as they were disposed to stay there.

A few hurried orders to Rodney, and before Stroker had more than changed his wet clothes for a suit of dry tweeds, there were some hot coffee, canned fish, cheese, bread, crackers, pickles, and other materials for a good meal, and they all sat down

to it in the kitchen, with the range giving out a grateful warmth, in contradistinction to the cold and damp without. The meal was a pleasant one, even although it was two o'clock in the morning.

Jim Rodney, who felt that he had earned his meal, sat down with the other two, and did not care whether Stroker was satisfied with him or not, while, as for Slater, if he had made any remark to grate on Rod's sensibilities, there would have been trouble, certainly.

The meal finished, Rod brought out a box of cigars from a cupboard in the dining-room, and Stroker and Slater took one each, and began to smoke. Rod looked inquiringly at Stroker, and a nod being the response, he took a cigar, and retired to a small room over the kitchen that he regarded as his own.

While Rodney lay in his bed and smoked peacefully, preparatory to dropping to sleep, Mathew Slater and Simon Stroker talked earnestly for half an hour, before they, too, went up to their rooms, on the floor above. What they talked about and resolved upon will be shown later.

The last words spoken by Stroker to Slater were shouted to him through the communicating doorway between their rooms, when both were in bed:

"So you didn't know what that shrieking, as you call it, was, eh?"

Mathew's voice trembled as he answered, hurriedly:

"No, and I don't want to think about it. Perhaps it was imagination on my part."

"Indeed it wasn't," laughed Stroker. "It was nothing more nor less than a locomotive on the Long Island Railroad. They make the most unearthly noises of any engines in the world, I think."

A great heave of relief seemed to pass through Slater's mind as he heard this explanation of the sound that his conscience had made supernatural, and he dropped to sleep almost immediately. The crimes he had committed did not disturb him. It was the fear of punishment, earthly or supernatural, that troubled him.

The three conspirators slept till the sun was well up in the heavens, and a beautiful Spring morning followed the thunderstorm of the night.

Slater was the first to arise, and his visit to the stable where Badger had been kicking about all night was something that he blamed himself for not performing when he came into the house after his trip from the Hemlocks.

Nothing but the perfect confidence in the strength of the stable and the knowledge that there were houses in the vicinity in which the inhabitants would keep an eye on the stable, which possessed Stroker, would have prevented his examining the stable as soon as he came home. But, as it was, he was satisfied with the declaration of Rodney that the horse was all right, and he had gone to bed without troubling himself about it.

Slater went to the stable through the kitchen—for the house was very like the Hemlocks in its general arrangement—and found Badger busy with his corn.

In spite of his Quaker pretensions, Slater was a good judge of a horse, and a thrill of satisfaction passed through him as he noted the small head, well-set on the arched neck, the clean, tapering limbs, the broad chest and strong loins, and the bright, fearless eye.

"He's fit to run for his life," was Slater's muttered comment. "But Fury would be too much for him on a mile track on the flat. If it were a steeplechase, it would be different. No; we must get the mare somehow, and if we cannot do anything else, I shall have to try what will be the result of my exercising my authority over my niece."

He passed his hand over Badger's neck, and the horse immediately lashed out one of his hind feet, as a reminder to Slater that he did not allow familiarity from strangers.

"Got some of the devil in him, of course. They all have. Well, I have some of it in me, I'm told, and I guess I'm none the worse for it. I suppose a

horse is a good deal like a man, after all."

Slater walked from the stable and found Stroker sitting at a breakfast of ham and eggs in the dining-room, well served by the ever useful Rodney. Without a word Slater sat down, too, and the two men ate their breakfast in silence.

"Now, Rod, we'll try Badger for a gallop over the road," said Stroker, curtly. "It is just a mile down to that clump of woods where Fury threw you. Trot Badger gently down there, and then gallop him back. D'yer hear?"

"It's a bloomin' shame ter gallop that there 'orse on the public road. 'Ow do I know w'ot there might be to run into 'is foot, an' lame 'im?" grumbled Rodney.

"It's my horse, and I'm taking those chances."

Stroker answered a great deal more good-temperedly than might have been expected, but the fact was that he appreciated the fidelity of Rodney, and was pleased to see that he had so much regard for the welfare of the horse.

"Stroker, there is sense in what Rodney says. Thee must admit that," put in Slater.

"None of your cussed business, Slater. When I want your advice I'll ask for it."

Stroker's manner was so different when he spoke to Slater that Mathew scowled at him with an expression that might have boded evil for Stroker had the big man not felt that he had too strong a hold over the other to care how he might look at him.

Mathew said no more, but stood silently by, while Rodney and Stroker saddled Badger with the greatest care, looking to see that the saddle-cloth was smooth, so that the saddle could not rub his back, that the bit was properly adjusted, and that everything about him was as comfortable as it could be made.

Rodney took off his heavy sack coat, and still with the inevitable bit of straw in his mouth, that was always there save when he was taking a meal or smoking, appeared in a red and black woolen shirt and the tight corduroy trousers that he always wore. The corduroy cap, with strings tied over the top of it, completed his costume, and taking a light riding whip from a nail in the stable, he walked around Badger, and examined each of his feet in turn.

"Fit as a fiddle," muttered Rod.

Stroker, swinging his heavy silver-knobbed crop in his hand, was looking at the horse critically. He was satisfied with him, and, had there been no black mare named Fury to be considered, he would not have felt nervous as to the outcome of the races to be run in the Spring and Fall, upon which so much depended for him. Simon Stroker was in bad shape, financially, and unless he got help of some kind, he would go to the wall with a crash, and perhaps find himself in prison for embezzlement as well.

He had two or three chances, however. One was to marry Ruth Slater if he could, and get possession of the million dollars he knew she was worth, besides the stocks, bonds and securities held for her by Lenz, Bach & Lenz, and that she would have got when she was eighteen, under a former will, even if the present will had not been lost. As for the \$100,000 that was in the Fidelity Safe Deposit vaults, that was another matter, and Slater would have to be brought to time about that if things worked out right. Unfortunately for Stroker, he had little faith in the outcome of the matrimonial scheme, in spite of Slater's determination to help him if he could. Stroker was forty-five, and Ruth was sixteen, and that was a little too much difference, as Stroker was obliged to acknowledge to himself, if to no one else.

Aside from his rather poor chances of winning Ruth, he must make a stake on the track, and he had determined to do that with Fury, when he made up his mind that it would be safer to trust to a horse that belonged entirely to himself, rather than to one in which he only had an interest so long as a whimsical girl

should give it to him. Yes, he would let Badger win the stakes he had designed for Fury, and the mare must be kept out of the running altogether. This explains why he was trying so desperately to obtain possession of Fury, temporarily, and why Battery Ben and the others who saw through the scheme were keeping so close a watch on the clever little mare.

While these thoughts were passing through his mind he was busy opening the stable door, and looking around to see that there was no one watching who might be suspected of trying to find out something about Badger's condition. It is not a usual thing for horse owners to try their favorites on the public road, but Stroker knew what he was about, and it was not yet known that Badger was meant to win, and little attention was paid to his movements by the public.

Stroker led Badger out to the road, and the horse submitted gracefully. He knew Stroker, and he did not feel toward him the antipathy he had manifested for Mathew Slater.

As Slater stood back and looked at the horse he thought that he was indeed a noble animal. His coat was a dark gray, that had indeed suggested his name of Badger, and there were dashes of white on his forehead and on his shoulders that gave him a remarkable appearance for a racehorse. As he stood there, with his neat saddle set upon a red cloth, and the new leather of his bridle hanging loosely over his arched neck, he was the picture of a thoroughbred.

"Give me a leg up," said Rodney, as he stood, with his face against the horse, his right hand twisted in the mane, his left at the back of the saddle, his left foot in the stirrup, and his right leg bent.

Rodney was not a picturesque object, but he looked much better when Stroker put his hand under the groom's bent knee and sent him flying into the saddle. It was remarkable to what advantage Rodney appeared on horseback, compared with his aspect on the ground. In the saddle he was master of the situation entirely, and any one would have trusted him to ride Badger to victory, with the feeling that if he did not win, it would not be the fault of the jockey.

"Now, Rod, trot him gently down to the place I told you, by that wood. Then turn him, and start a little below the wood, so as to have a good stride on him when he passes that fallen poplar there. That is just a mile from the gate. Look at your watch, if you can, so as to time him. We will wait here for you."

"All right. Let her go," answered Rodney, as he touched the horse lightly, and took him down the road at a good swinging, easy trot.

"He has a grand movement, and I don't know that he wouldn't beat the mare, anyhow," said Stroker, musingly, as he stood in the middle of the road, watching the horse covering the ground in good style.

"Friend Stroker, thee should never take any chances," answered Mathew, quietly. "and I don't mean to let that girl keep Fury away from us."

"I'd like to know how you are going to help it?"

"I'll show you," was the significant reply.

CHAPTER XV.

WHERE BADGER WENT.

At the very moment that Stroker and Slater were despatching Rod with Badger to give that horse a trial gallop, there was great excitement at the Hemlocks.

Ruth Slater had just arrived on one of the early morning trains, and, having gone to her own particular room with her governess, Euphemia Van Corten, had changed her ordinary dress for a blue riding habit that fitted her trim figure to perfection.

Ben Ward, Snap and Pat McGlone were all bustling about, obeying the many orders of the imperious little lady, and there was a general understanding that

when she said she wanted anything, she must have it.

She came down-stairs with her riding whip, long gloves and the skirt of her blue cloth habit all gathered up in her right hand, while Miss Van Corten, icily genteel, as usual, followed her with the well-bred air of fatigue that is considered good form the world over.

"Now, Ben, when I tell you, you may open the door of Fury's stable and let me see her, but don't open the door a moment before I say so, or I will never speak to you again."

The detective bowed, and Ruth sat down to the breakfast table, that had already been prepared by her own maid, who had come with her.

"Say, Ben, she's a peach, ain't she? I don't care fer these here swell dames, ez a rule, but she beats my game, an' I ain't a goin' back on my feelin's," declared Snap, enthusiastically.

"What do yer mean, yer little coyote?" asked Ben, disdainfully, as he looked Snap up and down. "Who do yer suppose cares what you think?"

"Well, Ben, I'm jist dead stuck on her, that's all about it, an' I don't care if she knows it. I think she's a little gone on me, too. Of course, she won't say nothin', but I see her lookin' at me a while ago, an' I'm no chicken. I know a thing or two."

Snap winked expressively, and brushed a speck of dirt off his coat sleeve, with an air that showed he considered himself something of a gallant.

Ben gave him a cuff, as he retorted:

"You miserable worm! If I hear yer say anything like thet thar' about Miss Ruth ag'in, I'll break yer in two."

"Bring her out, Ben!" sang out Miss Ruth's voice, as she came to the door of the dining-room with a cup of tea in her hand and looked into the kitchen.

"Who—Fury?"

"Yes. Whom else would I mean?"

She took back her cup and danced around the table in the glee that was natural to her in the bright morning, in spite of her terrible experiences of the night before, and had just given Miss Van Corten a playful tap on the cheek, when she was startled by a cry of dismay from Snap.

"What's the matter?" she cried, as she ran to the kitchen.

"It's de greatest swipe I've had fer a year," exclaimed Snap, as he looked at her with eyes distended in dismay.

Battery Ben pushed him aside, as he pointed to the stall in which Fury had been carefully disposed the night before.

The mare was gone.

"But I'll find her, Miss Ruth. Trust Battery Ben!"

As he spoke he ran out of the front door and looked up and down the road. There was no trace of the mare to be seen.

All was excitement. The stable was carefully examined, but it could not be discovered that the door had been disturbed, and the mare might have melted away, without going through a doorway at all, for anything that could be seen. She certainly had not come through the kitchen, and she could not have gone out through the little iron-barred window.

It was a mystery throughout, and as Ruth realized that her favorite had indeed been stolen, she clenched her white teeth and cracked her riding whip on her blue habit with a force that meant trouble for some one before long.

"What horses are there in the stable?" she asked of Battery Ben.

"There's the brown mare, and the English cob."

"Will you saddle the mare for me, Ben?"

For answer the brown mare, a handsome, serviceable-looking animal, but vastly inferior to Fury, stood at the side door of the house within five minutes. Without assistance, Ruth vaulted into the saddle, and, putting the mare at the fence that separated the garden from the public thoroughfare, went flying over it, and dashed up the road.

"Where's Pat?" asked Snap, as he looked about the garden, and remembered

that he had not seen McGlone all the morning.

The detective, reminded that the Irishman had been there the night before, and that he had slept in the house, was somewhat disturbed over his absence now, and he and Snap went all over the house in a vain search for him.

It could not be possible that the disappearance of Pat McGlone had anything to do with the carrying away of the mare Fury, surely. And yet it was suspicious, to say the least, and Stroker might have tried bribery.

Ben dismissed the unworthy thought as fast as it came into his head, but it kept returning at intervals, nevertheless, and he would have given a good deal to see Pat McGlone's honest face, with the drooping mustache, at that moment.

As for Miss Van Corten, she was accustomed to the young lady's erratic movements, and, as she took no particular interest in horses, the loss of Fury did not affect her, and she had made herself comfortable in the dining-room with a book, and was not thinking about anything but her own amusement.

"Say, cull, here's a mug a comin' down the road on a horse that might be the mare," suddenly exclaimed Snap, who had been standing at the front gate, waiting for the next move on the part of the detective.

Ben ran out to see whether it was possible that Snap could be right, and then smiled contemptuously.

"I don't believe you know a horse from a mule, Snap. You ought to go out to Arizona an' git a few p'inters on horse-flesh."

"Well, it's a horse, anyhow, an' it's jist everlastingly pastin' d'e miles out w'id its hoofs. I dun'no' what color it is. I ain't no telescope, an' d'at horse is half a mile away."

"It don't need an observatory to tell thet thet thar' horse is gray," answered Ben. "It's ez gray ez a badger."

Snap whistled and slapped his leg as an idea struck him.

"What's the matter, Snap? Got 'em?"

"Yes, s'help me, I have got 'em. Or, at least, I've got one. D'at word reminds me d'at I ought to know d'at horse. Dat's Badger, d'e horse w'ot d'ey means ter beat d'e little mare w'id. D'yer tumble to d'e racket?"

Ben saw the point and gave Snap a slap on the back in recognition of it that nearly knocked that gentleman down.

"You're right, Snap. But what in thunderation are they bringing it down here for?"

The horse was coming along at a great pace, full gallop, and the two young men saw with surprise that the man on his back was sitting well back, and pulling on the animal's mouth with all his might, apparently.

"I'm a goat if I don't believe d'e horse has run away w'id d'e mug on his back," shouted Snap, delightedly, for he enjoyed anything that seemed like a joke on any one else.

The detective saw that Snap was right. Badger was coming down the road at a long, striding gallop, with his head straight out, his nose almost between his knees, his tail streaming behind him, and the foam tossing from his mouth.

"Whoop! Let 'er come!" yelled Snap, in a burst of excitement, as he took off his Derby hat and waved it encouragingly.

Rodney sat in the saddle, both hands clutching the reins, which were as tight as steel rods. His feet were firmly fixed in the stirrups, and were thrust forward to their full length, while he sat so far back in his saddle that he was almost lying flat on his back.

But Badger had the bit between his teeth, and he cared no more for the little man on his back than if he had been a fly.

Ben and Snap watched the struggle between horse and man with breathless interest. Rodney did not say a word, but with tightly closed mouth, in which there was even then a piece of straw, he

tugged at the bridle with all his might and main.

He was thinking what he should say to Simon Stroker about his escapade, and what would be the result if Badger should be seriously injured by running into something, and he made up his mind that the only thing for him would be to commit suicide, because he did not believe that he could find a place on earth in which he would be safe from his employer's vengeance. He regarded Simon Stroker as something more than a man in many ways.

Down came Badger, with his struggling rider, and Snap jumped into the middle of the road to head them off, without having an exact idea of why he was doing it.

And then a plan struck Battery Ben, as he, too, jumped into the road, and stretched out his hands with a yell.

Rodney did not speak, because he had all the use possible for his breath without wasting it on unnecessary words.

Badger was cooler than his master, in spite of the headlong rate at which he was tearing down the road, and it passed through his horse's mind that it would be troublesome to knock over Battery Ben and Snap, and that it would be much easier to avoid them altogether if it could be done.

"Whoo—o—p!" yelled Snap.

"Stop right thar!" cried Battery Ben.

Badger was within a few yards of them, in fact, if he had raised himself in good shape and put on a little extra exertion, he could have jumped over their heads.

"Git out of the bloomin' way!" gasped Rod, finding his voice for an instant, and then clenching his teeth over his scrap of straw with a tighter grip than ever.

Badger's wild eyes glanced from right to left, and back again, and he saw what to do.

With a swerve that nearly threw Rod from the saddle, good horseman as he was, Badger turned into the gate, and flew through the yard of the Hemlocks to the back of the house.

Evidently he knew the way, for he did not hesitate as to his direction, in spite of all the tugging of Rodney at the bridle.

The detective and Snap followed the horse when he dashed past them through the gateway, and had reached the back of the house almost as soon as Badger had turned the corner.

They saw the gray give a shake to his head in the vain endeavor to loosen the hold of Rodney, and then, realizing that the little man was stuck on too firmly to be displaced in an ordinary way, the horse dashed toward the open doorway of Fury's stable, and ran into it forthwith.

One consequence of this maneuver can be imagined.

The stable door was moderately lofty, but not enough to allow a man on horseback to get through without being struck by the top of the opening.

Rodney saw that he would probably have his head knocked off against the cross-beam of the door-way, because there was not room enough for him to get through, even if he ducked right down. So he did the most sensible thing. He loosened his feet in the stirrups, and, raising himself by the pressure of his knees against the saddle, caught the outside of the beam that ran across the door, and allowed the horse to go in from beneath him, leaving him hanging.

"Good scheme!" cried Snap. "D'at's what I call an up-to-date move fer gitting off d'e back of er mule."

Badger ran to the manger that had lately been the property of the mare that was expected to be his rival on the race track, and began to eat corn as well as he could with a bit in his mouth, while Rod was trying to calculate how far he had to fall.

"Let 'er go for d'e cigars!" bawled Snap.

Rodney turned his head to give Snap a threatening look, and the result was a loosening of his hold, and the drop of the little groom flat on his back in a puddle of dirty water left from the rain of the night before.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE COMPACT.

Ruth had a set purpose in riding away on her brown mare.

As she dashed up the road at a good swinging pace, she was thinking, and her thoughts were hardly of the nature that Stroker would have approved, had he been able to read them.

"Uncle has taken that mare away, I know, and that nasty Stroker, who leads him into all kinds of mischief, has got him to do it."

She gave the mare a cut with the whip as she spoke, in the intensity of her reflections, and the mare sprang forward in response with such a sudden jerk that had not Ruth possessed a seat that hardly anything could disturb, she might have been spilled in rather ignominious fashion. As it was, she drew up and spoke soothingly to the mare:

"Ah? That was a shame, Bess. I did not mean to do it. And she's a nice, willing old girl, too. I was thinking of something else, Bess."

Whether the mare understood the words of the girl, it cannot be said, but there is no doubt that she recognized the caressing tone, and that it quieted her sensitive nerves. Horses are easily disturbed, and just as easily calmed, by those they know, and when Ruth spoke kindly to the brown mare she dropped into her steady gallop as a matter of course.

Ruth rode straight toward her uncle's pleasant place of sojourn, because she was confident that he was there. It was his custom to run down to Stroker's place at Coney Island for a night, when there was no one at the Hemlocks, and, in view of all she had learned about the plot to beat Fury in the races, she had no doubt that the two men were here consulting what was to be done, and most likely she would find her mare in their stable.

She did not regard her uncle as a thief in the matter of the horse, and, as for the will, she was quite content to wait and see what he intended to do with it. When a girl is worth a million dollars, and knows there is another \$500,000 in stocks and bonds in the hands of a law firm of respectability, she does not think so much of an odd \$100,000 as people who have nothing at all. This was the reason she did not think so much about the will that she knew her uncle was holding back as she might otherwise.

"If Fury is there I'll take her right away, and I'll tell uncle he is not behaving very well to me, too."

Ruth was mad, in her way, but she was too good natured a young lady to be vindictive, and if her uncle gave up the mare without difficulty, that would be all she would care about.

Suddenly she caught the sound of a horse's hoofs in the distance, coming toward her.

She reined up her brown mare, and drew her to the side of the road, where she could have the longest view up the way that she was going. There was a curve—in fact, several curves—and it was impossible to see very far.

But there was no doubt about the hoof-beats. The sound of her mare's feet had partly drowned them; but now that she had stopped, the noise of an approaching horse was perfectly distinct in the clear morning air.

Ruth's heart leaped with pleasure.

"It is Fury, of course. They are bringing her back, and it was only a joke they were playing. I think their humor was in rather bad taste, but so long as they bring her back, I'll pardon them. Go on, Bess. We'll hurry and meet her."

She twitched the reins slightly, and Bess, taking the hint, fell into her stride, and bowled up the road as gayly as could be desired, while the girl cut at the early buds on the bushes at the side of the road with her riding whip, in sheer lightness of spirits.

The hoof-beats came nearer and nearer, but still the horse and its rider were out of her vision on account of the many trees that blocked the side of the road.

At last she caught a glimpse of the horse through an opening in the trees. But it was only a glimpse, and beyond making out that a man was riding the horse, she could not tell anything about it.

The horse was a long way off, because the winding road had shown him coming along almost parallel to where she was, and he had to wind a good deal before he would meet her.

"Wonder if I couldn't cut across that meadow," thought Ruth.

To wonder was, with her, to try, and she put her brown mare at a low fence, partly broken down, and flew over into the field as gracefully as a bird. Every horse in Ruth Slater's stable was accustomed to taking any ordinary obstacle, because the young girl held that it was as necessary for a thoroughbred to be able to leap as to run.

The ground was heavy, and it was not an easy task she had set the brown mare, after the rain of the night before, which had soaked the place everywhere.

Still, the mare made pretty good time, and when at last the girl ran her through an opening in the fence instead of making her leap it with the mud clogging her hoofs, the strange horse and his rider were close to them, only just out of sight around a curve lined with the big poplars so common on Long Island.

Three or four more long strides by Bess, and Ruth found herself face to face with—Badger.

She held up her riding whip imperiously, but it was useless. The gray horse had already bolted, with the bit between its teeth, and even as the girl wondered why Rodney did not obey her signal to halt, the big gray swept past her, and the mud from his flying hoofs had bespattered the skirt of her blue habit.

"Now, what does that mean?" muttered the girl, as she resumed her trip toward Stroker's cottage. "That was Badger, I know, and a strong animal he is. He gallops well, too, although the man has let him get away. Allowing for the excitement of the occasion, I think that when he has had a little more exercise, and is ridden by a man that can hold him, he ought to make a pretty good showing on the track."

Ruth understood horses pretty well, and she had picked up much of the jargon of the race track and the stables almost unconsciously.

Not much further had Ruth to ride before she met her uncle and Simon Stroker standing in the road, with their watches in their hands, peering in her direction. As she appeared, Mathew Slater pocketed his watch and tried to be unconcerned.

"Ruth, my dear, thee is out early. Well, it is right. Youth is at its best near the dawn."

"Fudge!" was the rather unladylike response of the girl.

"Good-morning, Miss Ruth," said Stroker, taking off his hat with ponderous politeness.

"Morning!" answered Ruth, shortly. "Where's Fury?"

"Eh?"

"You heard what I said. Where's Fury—my mare?"

"I don't—"

"Tell the truth, Mr. Stroker. I know that you have had my mare taken from her stable, and have brought her up here, and I must tell you that I do not like such liberties. I want my mare, and I want her now."

"Ruth, my dear, Mr. Stroker has not seen your mare," said Slater, mildly.

"I know better, uncle. And, by the way, where did you get that black eye?"

Mathew hastily put his hand over his eye that was still badly discolored from the reminder he had had of Pat McGlone's fist the night before.

"You needn't try to hide it," added Ruth, cruelly. "It wouldn't hide itself if your hand were twice as large as it is."

Mathew did not answer, and Ruth remarked, carelessly, as she started her mare:

"I'm going up to your stable, to see for myself whether Fury is there. I wouldn't

trust either of you when horseflesh is concerned."

Without listening to the remonstrances that Stroker and Slater both tried to utter, the girl dashed up to the house, leaving the two men completely mystified.

They had made up their minds that something had happened to Badger, and Stroker was in a terrible temper. He was a man of quiet manner, who seldom allowed his feelings to get the mastery of him. But now, what with Ruth Slater's snubs, the absence of the horse upon which so much depended, and the doubt as to what had become of the mare Fury, he could not contain himself.

He uttered a series of oaths with such vehemence that Slater actually did not know what to do or say.

At last, Stroker calmed down a little, as he made up his mind partly as to the course that must be pursued.

"Slater, you killed old Lenz."

The words were so cold and incisive that Slater started as if he had been stabbed with a dagger.

"Never mind whether you did or not," continued Stroker. "Appearances are against you. Then that will, that gives Ruth Slater \$100,000 that you have spent. You know where that will is. Well, I am willing to marry Ruth, and settle all the trouble for you and for me. You must arrange that, somehow."

"Yes, yes," answered Slater, hurriedly and nervously. "But, you see, Ruth has a temper of her own."

"You always say she is very good-tempered."

"So she is, unless any one tries to impose upon her, or she thinks any one is trying to do it. Then she is a devil—a perfect devil."

Undoubtedly Slater meant what he said, for he glanced up the road at the rapidly retreating figure of his niece upon her brown mare with an expression of apprehension, as if he feared she might hear his words.

Stroker was looking down the road in the hope of seeing something of Badger, and Slater was turning something over in his mind. At last Slater seemed to have reached a determination, for he slapped one fist against the other, and called to Stroker, who was some yards away:

"Stroker, come here. I've something to say."

This was not a time for Slater to bother with his Quaker dialect, and he had not used it in any of the conversation he had held with Stroker since Ruth had come into sight.

Stroker came to him quickly, for he could see that Slater had come to some resolve, and instinct told him that it was an important one, that might redound to their advantage.

Slater pulled him close to him, and, after looking around cautiously, whispered something into the ear of his companion that made him start in astonishment.

"You'll do that?" he asked hoarsely, in low tones.

"I'll do it," answered Slater, impressively. "But, of course, you will have to help me, and take a share of the responsibility."

"You think you can make Ruth give way?"

"We can try," responded Slater, with a sickly smile, as he placed his hand mechanically over his black eye.

"And Fury?"

"We'll take care of Fury. So, you see, we shall be safe, either way. If we think it wise to keep her out of the race altogether, we can do so. But, anyhow, Badger will win."

For a minute and over Stroker stood, rubbing his hands, with his eyes fixed upon the ground, in deep thought. The villainy proposed to him by Slater was not to his taste, unscrupulous as he was, but he could not see his way out of it, if he was to accomplish the purpose in his heart—to avoid the ruin that was closing around him from all sides.

"Well?" asked Slater, at last, as he looked anxiously into the saturnine countenance of his companion.

Another few moments of hesitation, and then Stroker, with a sigh that betokened how hard he had found it to make up his mind, said, slowly and grimly:

"I'll do it!"

Slater put out his hand, and the two shook hands, looking into each other's eyes, thus ratifying a scheme that meant Heaven knows what injury toward the innocent young girl just galloping up to the cottage of Simon Stroker at that moment, over a mile away.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE YELLOW FLASH.

Where was Pat McGlone?

When Fury disappeared in the middle of the night in such a mysterious manner, it was perhaps natural that the simultaneous disappearance of the Irishman should cause a suspicion in the mind of the detective that he did not like to entertain.

Pat McGlone was acknowledged as the admirer of Mrs. Ward, Battery Ben's mother, and it was understood that the good-looking widow would become Mrs. McGlone in due course. Then Pat was a close friend of Battery Ben's, and the interests of one were those of the other.

And yet—here was Miss Ruth's valuable mare gone out of the stable in the night, and at the same time Pat McGlone goes, too, without any explanation.

Perhaps the reader would like to know something about this seemingly inexplicable affair, and the explanation is simple, after all.

Pat was asleep in a room over the stable, of which a large portion was filled with hay, while a great bin along one side held corn. The room did not extend over the stall in which Fury had been kept, but over the adjoining stable in which the other horses had their residence.

Pat McGlone was tired after his exertions of the day before. He had gone up to the vaudeville theater to act as waiter, at the request of Bloggs, who was short-handed, and whom Pat had often met in the old days before he took charge of Mrs. Ward's restaurant on the Bowery, and found favor in her sight. But Pat did not care for the Coney Island job, and he did not intend to go more than one night more, if he could possibly help it. Still, he had his ideas of honor in the matter, and he worked as faithfully there for the one night he had been employed as if he were a regular member of the staff and expected to draw a big salary, instead of the two dollars a day that Bloggs had agreed to pay.

"Phwat's thot?" said Pat to himself, as he was awakened by a flash of light breaking across his face as he lay on his cot bed at one end of the lift.

Pat had been sound asleep, when something that might have been a flash of lightning seemed to force his eyes open.

He sat up on his cot, but a long roll of thunder that seemed as if it would crash in the roof, reassured him, and he lay down again, with that feeling of comfort that we all know when we have been very tired and realize that we have nothing to do but to rest.

Pat closed his eyes and pulled the gray army blanket over his broad shoulders, as he muttered something about being rather chilly, when another flash of light, stronger than the first, darted across his closed eyelids and made him turn over in impatience.

"Bad cess to it. Thot lightning is about the strongest Oi iver saw in all me borrun doys, so it is."

There was a crash of thunder that made Pat draw his head under his blanket, when he suddenly darted it out and listened intently.

The thunder was still rolling, but there was another sound that was not thunder, that had started during the roll, and kept up a few moments beyond it. It was a breaking, cracking sound, like some one forcing a door.

In a second Pat was out of bed, and

standing in his underclothes, waiting for a repetition of the sound. Another flash of lightning, that seemed to Pat to bear an aspect such as he had never noticed in it before, in the shape of a yellowy glare forcing its way through the steely blue, made Pat put his hands before his eyes. A pause, and then a peal of thunder, accompanied by the breaking, crashing sound, more marked than before.

Pat hustled himself into his trousers, and made a jump for the trap-door that covered the hole below which was the ladder leading to a narrow space between Fury's private stable and the large apartment in which the other horses were kept.

All was dark below, and not a sound could be heard save the whistling of the wind outside and the sighing of the leaves of the tall poplars that were bending before the breeze, and uttering those low wails as if of pain peculiar to that species of tree.

"Be gob! Oi don't loike this. It's a little too streelish fer me, so it is. Oi wondher whether there's any ghosts a wandherin' around. Faith, if there is, Oi'm thinkin' they'll be takin' me fer anither ghost, anyhow, an' Oi'm feelin' loike thot same, so Oi am."

Pat was rambling on thus, hardly knowing what he was saying, just to keep up his courage. He was not afraid of anything alive in this world, but he had a mortal fear of the imaginary visitants from the other world, and was a hundred times more afraid of a ghost than of a midnight assassin.

"Be the powers, Oi'm thinkin' Oi'll have ter go down the laddher, so Oi wull. Fer if any one is a takin' Miss Ruth's mare, or is thryin' ter do her harrum, Oi must be to the fore, fer the glory of Oul' Oireland, if nothin' else."

He was standing on the top rung of the ladder when that awful light flashed in his face, making him close his eyes involuntarily, and almost knocking him backward by its brilliancy.

He knew in an instant that this was not lightning, and he was not surprised that there was no thunder following it. But what it was he could not tell, save that it meant danger.

He recovered himself almost instantly, and muttered, half aloud:

"Och, if Oi only had me bit of a shtick Oi wouldn't care, so Oi wouldn't. Oi'm thinkin' thot if there's any one here, Oi'll be gittin' shtruck on the head, an' Oi won't hov' any show at all at all."

Another flash of lightning—that was really lightning this time—and then a crash of thunder, accompanied, as before, by the breaking, splintering sound with which Pat McGlone had become familiar by this time.

He hesitated no longer. He had made up his mind that there was some one trying to accomplish some unlawful purpose, and that the some one was not below, but above—in the loft. The only light in the loft was from a skylight, covered with iron network, and upon which the rain was pattering steadily.

"If Oi could only see phwat I wuz doin' it wouldn't be so bad," thought Pat. "But, begorra, Oi'll explore, onyhow."

He stepped back to where he knew his cot was, but couldn't find it. It had gone from the place where Pat felt sure it should have been, and he felt his hair rising as he thought that it had been removed by supernatural means.

"The saints presarve us!" he muttered. "Oi think Oi'll call Battery Ben."

He walked toward the trap-door again, but suddenly stopped, as he heard a sound behind him that was unmistakably something breathing.

"Ow! Phwat shall Oi do?" he exclaimed aloud, in an agony of terror. "Sure, there's divils br'athin' all round me, an' ghosts an' wraiths, and banshees an' things cryin' and howlin' all about me! Ow!"

Poor Pat was so overcome by the horror of what he believed was a ghostly experience that he staggered, and pressed his hands to his eyes, to try to brace himself up. His terror was struggling with his natural bravery, and he was ashamed of

himself, in spite of his fear of what he could not understand.

The breathing had stopped, and Pat found his thick stick that he usually relied on when he got into dangerous company. It was a regular policeman's club that he had bought with his own money when on the police force, and that was therefore his own property.

"Bad cess ter yez, whoever yez are!" he exclaimed aloud, feeling himself equal to anything now that he could grasp his good hickory club in his fist.

He made up his mind that he would wait for the next flash of lightning, and take a good look about the loft. Then, if he saw anything or anybody that should not be there, he would—

But before he could finish his thought as to what he should do, there was that yellow glare again, with the blue of the lightning intermingled, and he was so dazzled that he could not see anything after all.

"Be the powers, this is the worst thing Oi ever got into in all my loife," he muttered. "Here Oi am, wid some one right at me elbow, Oi know, and perhaps the mare wull be shtolen, an' Oi loike a fule can't shtop it."

Then there was a roll of thunder, and that curious breaking and splintering noise for which he could not account.

He ran toward the trap, for now he knew that the noise was below, in Fury's stable, and he determined to go there, regardless of what he might hear and meet, when there was a loud splintering, without the accompaniment of thunder, as if the marauders had got so far that they did not care to hide their doings any longer.

"Ye impudent shpalpeens, an' yez don't know thot Pat McGlone is to the fore, eh? Well, Oi'll soon tache yez thot Oi'm here, so Oi wull."

Without hesitation he jumped into the opening, taking his chances about alighting on top of the ladder, and flourishing his club, ready to tackle any one or anybody.

Fortunately for himself, his feet came upon the ladder, and he ran down with a celerity that surprised him afterward when he thought of it, for he might have missed, in the dark, and gone down headlong.

The cracking and splintering were now going on with a ferocity that indicated how desperately the strangers, whoever they were, had resolved to carry through their scheme, whatever it might be, in defiance of possible interference.

Pat felt sure now that it was the intention to steal Fury, and he was resolved to prevent it, single-handed and alone. One thing was that the detective was asleep somewhere in the house, and he could not find him without disturbing everybody, to say nothing of the thieves escaping before he could get help.

"No; be the powers, Oi'll take thim myself. Oi'm able to do it, an' Oi'll save the young leddy's mare if it kills me, so Oi wull. An' won't the Widdy Ward be the proud woman whin she hears what Oi've done all be meself."

Even in that exciting moment, Pat McGlone could not forget the comely widow, with her well paying restaurant on the Bowery.

At the bottom of the ladder there was a door leading into Fury's stable that he had locked on his side the night before, leaving the key in the door. He fumbled for the key, but it was not there. What was more, the stable door was still locked.

"Bad cess to it. Oi suppose the kay hez dropped out on the flure, an' Oi'll be huntin' for it whole those fellers on the ither side are doing what they plaze," muttered Pat, as he dropped upon his hands and knees and tried to find the key.

There was no way of getting to the yard from the narrow slip of a place in which he stood, and he did not want to go into the house, even if he could have done so without disturbing some one to let him in, for the door to the house was fastened inside, and he had no means of opening the door from his side.

Pat had put his club down while he searched for the key, and was just fum-

bling in his vest pocket for a match, although it was a dangerous thing to light one among the hay and dry material of that narrow slip of a place.

The breaking and splintering were going on still in the other part of the stable, and now he could hear the stamping of hoofs, that told him the mettlesome mare had been disturbed. He hoped that some one in the house would hear the racket, but remembered at once that sounds in the stable were not easily distinguished in the house. The builder of the premises had put up the place for comfort, and had been particularly careful that neither smell nor sound from the stable could penetrate to the house, where people were to live in luxury.

"Oi'll foind that kay, if it takes a leg!" muttered Pat, as he reached around on his hands and knees, and jammed his hands among the sawdust and earth on the floor.

It was at this moment that the splintering and breaking became louder than ever. Then the yellow light flashed in his eyes, and at the same instant something struck him on the head and knocked him flat, half stunned, but still with enough consciousness to leave him aware that the doors were all open, and that a horse was galloping out of the stable, with a man shouting in triumph and urging the animal to the top of its speed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PAT MCGLONE'S RACE.

Pat was not badly hurt. Perhaps his head was too thick to be cracked by a blow, no matter how hard it might be, but certain it is that the sound of the galloping hoofs brought him to himself immediately.

He put his hand to his head, which had been partly protected by the thick felt hat he wore, and as he felt something wet, he knew that he had experienced a hard blow with some instrument that had broken the skin and caused his scalp to bleed.

"Och, well, sure Oi could let a little blood, an' fale all the better for it," was his philosophical comment. "An', be the powers, if they had knocked out all the brains uv me, Oi dun'no' thot Oi would miss 'em much, for Oi don't use thim to any great extent, or Oi would niver hov' let that thafe uv the wurruld git away wi'd the mare."

He was getting upon his feet as he spoke, and he found that he was still a little dizzy, in spite of his cheerful comments on his injuries and his declaration that he was not hurt.

"I guess it wuz a pisthol ez he hit me with," thought Pat. "Wull, so long as he didn't shoot me, Oi hov' nothin' ter say."

He stepped hastily through the door that led to Fury's stall, and the cool morning air revived him, and did more to dispel the dizziness than anything else.

He looked hastily around, for there was enough light in the stall to enable him to see something of the situation, and, even while he was wondering where the light came from, he saw that the gas-jet, in its wire cage, that protruded from the wall above his head, had been lighted and turned down so that it should give enough light without being likely to attract attention.

But to this he gave only a passing glance. What struck him was that the mare was gone, and that there was a door where he had never seen one before.

"Be jabbers! Oi'm thinkin' thim fellers must be somethin' more than min, whin they can make dures jist where they want thim and thim git out wi'd a mare ez no one kin touch onless they know her, ez a rule."

Pat could not overcome a little feeling of superstition, in spite of his ordinary bravery, and he would have been only too pleased to have had Battery Ben by his side to consult with him, and to impart to him some of that cheerful confidence that he said he had acquired "in Arizony," but that Pat was convinced had been inherited by the boy from his mother.

However, this was no time for vain regrets, and Pat McGlone's mind was soon made up.

"Oi'll bring back that little mare, safe an' sound, or Oi'll never marry the Widdy Ward!"

The most solemn oath Pat McGlone could have taken would not have been more binding in his mind than this simple declaration, which involved all his happiness in this world, as he firmly believed.

He had not been idle while making up this resolve. He had been searching among the sawdust for his club, and now, having fastened it to his wrist by the silken cord with the gay tassel, he was out in Fury's stall again, and examining the secret door that had been forced open by the strangers, who seemed to have a greater knowledge of the place than either he or the Race-Course Detective.

"They can't hov' gone far wi'd the mare yit, Oi'm sure," muttered Pat, as he ran out into the yard.

He could not see or hear anything of the mare. He supposed he would hear her hoof-beats down or up the road, and he ran to the gate and listened intently.

Not a sound. All was as silent as it generally is in the country at that time in the morning, a little before dawn, and beyond the indescribable rolling and sighing of the sea, that could hardly be called a noise, there was nothing to suggest movement anywhere.

"Bad cess to them! What hov' they done wi'd the mare? They can't hov' put muffles on the feet uv her, surely."

He ran back to the house and looked into the stable. No, the mare was certainly gone.

"Oi wondher whether Oi'm bewitched, fer me sins," thought Pat, seriously. "Begorra, Oi don't undershtand it at all at all. There wuz the mare there half an hour ago. Thin there comes a bad noise that a dacint mon can't make out, thin Oi git cracked on the head with a pisthol, thin Oi hear the mare runnin' away, thin Oi go afther her, and then, be gravy, she ain't there. It's too much fer me, so it is. Wull, Oi'll close up the dure, so that no wan else can come in this way, an' Oi'll chase afther the mare, for Oi mane ter foind her, if it takes all summer and part of the winter, so Oi wull."

With this heroic resolve Pat closed the secret door, and was surprised to see how closely it fitted into the wall, and how hard it would be—in fact, impossible—for a stranger to detect it.

He had just closed the door when something moving at the foot of the big poplar in the garden attracted his attention.

"Be jabbers, there's some feller going ter the big poplar, an' he knows what wuz buried there."

There were some bushes between the tree and Pat, but Pat did not notice them in the dark, and he ran straight for the tree to catch the man that he saw was digging around the roots.

Pat ran full tilt, but quietly, for he did not want to attract the attention of the stranger till he was near enough to capture him. The Irishman was within a few yards of the tree, and was just about to make a long spring, so as to alight on the back of the stooping man, when his feet caught in the roots of the bushes that he had not noticed, and he plunged forward headlong and lay at full length amid a lot of sharp, brambly twigs, with his feet all twisted up in long, tough roots, that held him completely a prisoner.

At the same instant the man who had been stooping, arose quickly, with something hugged in his arms, that Pat knew was the tin box containing the will, and looked about to see where the noise came from.

Perhaps it was fortunate for Pat McGlone that he was invisible as he lay among the bushes, for the stranger had a pistol in his hand—a large pistol, that Pat felt sure had been used to give him the crack from which his head was still aching—and it was reasonable to suppose that a man engaged in so desperate an adventure as the robbery of a house in the small hours of the morning, and the carrying off of a valuable racehorse, besides other property, would not hesitate to shoot if he considered it necessary for his own safety.

Pat took this view of the case till the stranger walked to the gate and across the

road. Then, when Pat saw him lead from the shadow of a clump of trees a horse that he recognized even in the darkness as Fury, and leisurely get upon her back, he could not restrain himself any longer.

He tore himself from the clasp of the prickly bushes, and, with a yell of vengeance, dashed toward the gate.

The man who was mounting Fury saw a dark figure bounding toward him, and leveled his pistol, but evidently thought it might be dangerous to fire and bring out the people in the house. So he answered Pat's yell with another of defiance, and set the mare down the road.

But here the stranger reckoned without his host, so to speak. Fury was not the animal to do anything unless she felt inclined, and she did not feel inclined to go down the road at that moment. So she kicked and reared, and played all the tiresome tricks that she had learned long ago, and that were calculated to make a stranger nervous.

The man on her back was a big fellow, but he was a good horseman, and his weight may have had something to do with keeping the mare to a degree within bounds. She found it laborious work to kick and rear with such a weight on her. Still, she would not do as her rider wished her.

Pat was not slow to take advantage of this state of things. He got to the gate, and when the mare kicked around in his direction, he ran to her head and tried to seize the bridle.

"Git away, gol darn yer!" hissed a hoarse voice, as the man in the saddle tried to strike Pat with the pistol.

"It's all right. He don't dare fire!" thought Pat.

Pat McGlone was a man of ready wit, and now that he saw the stranger would not be likely to use his pistol, he felt that he would be able to rescue the mare yet before any one knew that there had been an attempt to steal her.

"Ye dirty thafe, come aff the horse, will yez?" demanded Pat, as he tried to pull the other from the saddle.

"Quit ye'r fooling, Pat McGlone!" said the stranger.

"Och, yez know me name, do yez? Well, it's small thanks Oi owe to meself fer bein' known ter the loikes of yez," said Pat, at the same time wondering how it was that this man, whom he could not remember ever to have seen before, was so familiar with his name.

And yet it was simple enough. The man on Fury's back, who was trying to steal her for Mathew Slater, and who at that moment held in the inside pocket of his rough coat the will that gave Ruth Slater a fortune, was none other than Sam Slyme, the 'longshoreman' who had been kicked out of Mrs. Ward's restaurant in the Bowery the night before, and who was obliged to do the bidding of Mathew Slater in all things because Slater knew too much about him, and could place him in the Tombs at any time if he thought it worth while.

The mare was darting about the road, and showed little likelihood of ever obeying the directions of her rider, while Pat McGlone was trying to get hold of her head, when suddenly the mare took a new notion, and dashed down the road at the top of her speed, with Pat hanging to her bridle, and being dragged along over the road, a heap of muddy, disgruntled humanity.

Sam Slyme hung to the saddle in desperation, and could not do anything to rid himself of the presence of Pat McGlone, try as he might. The Irishman was there to stay, if his brains should be dashed out against the stones on the roadway.

The mare soon got tired of the race, however. All at once she made up her mind to stop, and she stopped so suddenly that Slyme nearly went over her head, while Pat was thrown flat on his back.

Pat was up in an instant, and tried to pull Slyme out of the saddle. Slyme was not afraid of his shot being heard now, and he tried to get his pistol loose so that he could use it in the regular way.

Perhaps he might have succeeded, in spite of Pat's struggles, if the mare had not suddenly taken a notion for another

gallop. To take the notion and carry it out was one thing for her, and Pat McGlone found himself alone, with the mare galloping away, and the man on her back laughing derisively before he knew what had happened.

"Be the saints, he sha'n't git away. Oi'll follow him till daylight," declared Pat, to himself, as he ran down the road as briskly as he could after the mare.

His persistence was rewarded, for Fury soon stopped, and did nothing but whirl around in a circle until Pat came up with her, when she shook her head, whisked her tail, and dashed away again.

It need not be told in detail how many times Fury repeated this maneuver. Suffice it to say that dawn was breaking when Pat McGlone found himself following the mare and her rider down a long cutting that is used by the electric cars that run from the ferry house at Thirty-ninth Street, Brooklyn, to Coney Island.

The mare had just taken one of her erratic gallops, and Pat saw with dismay that it was the longest one yet, and that she showed no disposition to stop.

"Bad cess to her! There's the ferry coming in from the bay. Now, if they get on that boat before Oi can get to it, and go out Oi'm gone. There won't be another boat for half an hour, an' Oi'll hov' no chance ever to catch up to the mare again, so Oi won't."

It was evident that Sam Slyme was thinking the same thing, for Pat saw him turn in his saddle and smile triumphantly. It was broad daylight now, and Pat could easily distinguish the expression of his countenance, and see that he was delighted over the failure of Pat's pursuit, after keeping it up for such a distance.

"The thafe of the wurruld hez been roidin' all the toime, too, an' Oi, although Oi'm a betther mon than he is, hov' had to walk. It's too bad, so it is."

Fury was dashing away toward the ferry house, and Pat saw that the boat was in the slip. There were not many people coming off, and Sam Slyme rode on with Fury, and then dismounted, and looked anxiously back to see whether Pat McGlone could get there before the boat pulled out. He knew that the boat would go exactly at her time, regardless of any straggler who might be trying to catch it, and he felt confident that Pat would be on the pier when the boat steamed out into the bay.

"I'll beat that cussed Irishman, after all," Slyme was saying to himself, as the bell rang for the start, and Pat was still some distance away.

"Why don't they hurry up there?" muttered Slyme. "They are as slow as a lot of old women."

The deck hands and others who detach the ferryboats were going about their work in their usual leisurely fashion, and Pat McGlone was panting along, with his drooping mustache all awry, and his face flushed with exertion.

"Too late, by gracious!" cried Slyme, in triumph, as Pat came tearing down the approach to the boat, having rushed past the gateman.

There was twenty feet of water between the dock and the boat, and it would be a physical impossibility for Pat to jump that distance, notwithstanding his evident willingness to try it, and Slyme laughed in a way that made Pat feel inclined to commit murder.

"Good-by, Pat! Maybe we'll see each other again some time!" said Slyme, as the boat steamed away.

"Hello! What is this?" he continued, with an expression of alarm on his face, while Pat's countenance showed an eagerness, mingled with hope, that was absolutely refreshing.

The boat was bumping and banging about in the slip, having failed to get a proper headway, and was actually backing toward the dock as the pilot wrestled with his wheel, and tried to get the nose of the boat pointed straight out.

Thirty feet! Twenty feet! Ten feet! Eight! Seven! Six!

Ah! Now she was going ahead again, and the pilot had the craft well in hand.

But before the engines and the wheels took her toward New York, there was a

flash of a dark figure, with a long, drooping mustache, leaping from the dock, and Pat McGlone was aboard, with his hand on the bridle of Fury, Ruth Slater's thoroughbred mare.

CHAPTER XIX.

BEN A PRISONER.

As soon as Rodney had dropped upon his back into the water at the doorway of Fury's stable, the detective ran to him and stood him upon his feet, while he plied him with questions as to what he had done with Ruth Slater's mare.

Rodney was too confused to understand exactly what was meant. He knew that the mare had come home after the unsuccessful attempt of Stroker to steal her, and he knew nothing about her disappearance again, as the reader knows, because the mare had gone the other way this time and was in the custody of Slyme or Pat McGlone, which one will be revealed in a later chapter.

"Bli' me if I know what you are a drivin' at," said Rodney, as he looked about in the stable for a fresh bit of straw to chew. "I ain't seen the mare since yesterday, an' I wish I'd never seen the bloomin' thing. The governor keeps me messin' about with 'er, an' I don't want nothin' to do with 'er. The Badger is my 'oss, an' I suppose I'll git a nice wiggin' from Mr. Stroker now 'cause I couldn't 'old 'im in."

"Bolted with yer, eh?" asked Ben.

"Oh, d'at mug can't ride. I could see d'at in a minute. Why, he ought ter be drivin' one of d'ese here city sweepers. D'at's his gait," observed Snap.

Rodney looked indignantly at Snap as he asked the detective what he was going to do with Badger, now he had him in the stable.

"Well, now, you can just put this in ye'r pipe an' smoke it," answered Ben. "I believe that you know something about that thar' mare ez belongs to Miss Ruth, an' I'm goin' ter find out about it afore I let's yer take Badger out."

"Dat's de business. See?" put in Snap.

"I'm blowed if that young fellow won't git a thump in the jaw if 'e don't keep 'is mouth shut," remarked Rodney, severely, as he transfixed Snap with his eye.

"I will, eh? An' what do yer s'pose I'd be doing? Why, I'd wipe de Island up w'd yer, if yer ever tried ter be gay w'd me. See?"

Rodney turned contemptuously away from Snap, much to that small hero's disgust, and was about to walk into the stable when Ben stepped in his way.

"Not now, Jim Rodney. That stable belongs to Miss Ruth."

"But Badger don't belong to her."

"Yes, he does, just now."

"Well, I'm goin' in ter take 'im out," insisted Rodney, clutching his whip.

"Oh, no, yer ain't," said Ben quietly.

"Who'll prevent me?"

"I will."

There was no mistaking the determination in the detective's tone as he spoke, and Rodney made up his mind that he must obey. So he sulkily withdrew from the door and asked the young man what he was expected to do.

"I'll tell yer. You'll leave that thar' horse Badger in ther stable, an' you'll go with me to find our mare Fury. She's up at ther crib yonder, an' I mean ter hev' her before Miss Ruth gits back, if she don't come first."

"How will we get there?" asked Rodney. "It's better'n three miles to the place, an' we can't walk there in less than an hour."

"We'll walk," was the detective's sententious response. "I don't want to attract attention ez we go up."

Without more discussion the two marched up the road that led to the cottage of Simon Stroker, and it was almost painful to see how hard it was for Rodney to pad along the road in the dust and mud, when he had been used to riding so much.

"There's the 'ouse," said Rodney, sulkily, as they came within view of the trees that hid Stroker's cottage

"I know it," answered Ben. "We'll go an' see what they mean to do about Fury. Take me around ter ther stables first."

"I can't."

"Well, you will."

Rodney turned quickly, and—looked into the muzzle of a six-shooter.

"W'ot's that mean?"

The detective's manner had changed, and he had dropped entirely the careless demeanor that was natural to him. He clutched the pistol firmly in his hand, and Rodney saw that it was a terribly long, big weapon, such as is used in the West, and that it had a long, gleaming barrel, that looked like silver. He also saw that the hand that held it was firm and quiet, and that the expression of Battery Ben's eye permitted no doubt that he would shoot, if he deemed it necessary.

Rodney did not ask again what it meant. He saw what it meant, and, with a shrug of his shoulders, and a champ at the bit of straw in his mouth, he led the young detective around to the stables, by a path that kept them out of sight of the house windows.

"Open the door," commanded Ben, as they reached the stable.

"How can I? I ain't got no key."

"You know where it is."

Rodney looked at Ben as if he almost believed him to possess supernatural prescience. Then he thrust his hand into a small hole made by pulling out a brick from a corner of the house, and took out a key that unlocked the door.

"Good," thought Ben. "I shall know how to let myself in after this."

Evidently Rodney read his thoughts, for he said, with a sneering smile: "This key will never be put here again. I did 't myself this morning, because I knew there was nothing in the stable to steal."

To prove his words, he threw open the stable door and showed that the place was entirely empty. There was room for half a dozen horses, with one large, square box in the corner, over which there was a sign in gilt letters, "Badger," but every place was empty.

The detective, still with his pistol in hand, made Rodney walk in ahead of him, and then he examined every stall, and particularly that of Badger. Badger's stall showed signs of having been lately occupied, for the bed had been made up not many hours ago, as Ben's experienced eye told him. But the other stalls were swept up, and there was dust on the mangers and at the sides, showing that they had been untenanted for some time. In fact, the whole stable showed that it had not been much used of late, a decision in which he was confirmed by the almost entire absence of stable odors.

"See? Badger 'as been in this 'ere stable, but there ain't been no other bloomin' horse in the crib for weeks," declared Rodney, as he kept just in front of Battery Ben's pistol.

"That may be so, Jim Rodney, but out in Arizony we never took er thing fer granted unless we had mighty good proof. Now, I'm sure ez that thar' mare of Miss Ruth's is somewhar 'bout this hyar ranch, an' I'm er goin' ter hev' her afore I leave."

"Are you?" shouted a voice behind him, that he recognized as that of Stroker.

The pistol was dashed from his hand by a blow from the heavy silver-topped crop with which the reader has already become acquainted, and Rodney jumped forward and hit the young detective a fierce blow in the chest.

The detective had had a Western experience, and was never to be taken completely by surprise, so he returned Rodney's blow with a tremendous wipe in the mouth, and the little English groom went flat on his back into Badger's stall.

"Cuss' you, I'll kill you!" yelled Stroker, and then the silver knob of the crop came down on the detective's shoulder, rendering his right arm temporarily useless. The blow just missed his head, for which it was aimed, by the lucky chance of Ben moving a little to one side at the critical instant, but had

his coat and shirt not been pretty thick over his shoulder, his arm would most likely have been broken. As it was, he knew, in the midst of the excitement, that he had suffered nothing worse than a bruise.

"Gently, friend Benjamin," broke in another voice, and Mathew Slater took the detective by the arm, and, with a deftness that would hardly have been expected in such a man, Mathew Slater seized a rope halter from a nail, and twisted it around the detective in such a way that his arms were bound tightly to his sides, with his hands just able to wiggle at the outside of his thighs.

Then Stroker released him, and, picking up the pistol, stood toying with it, fiercely, and looking at the detective as if in doubt whether to blow out his brains or not.

Rodney had arisen to his feet, and he could not resist the temptation to give the detective a slap on one cheek, and then on the other, with his open hand.

"Bli' me, if I ain't a good mind to punch yer in the nose," he exclaimed, savagely. "I'll 'ave a fair stand-up mill with yer some time, an' then I'll 'it yer so 'ard yer'll think you're in a bloomin' threshin' machine."

Stroker gave Rodney an unceremonious kick that sent him to the other end of the stable, and, turning to the detective, said:

"You are nothing but a paltry horse thief, and I shall turn you over to the police. You have been pretending to be an officer, which is a serious offense in itself, and I think that, altogether, it will not be much trouble to put you in the penitentiary for a few years."

The detective looked into the eyes of Stroker for a moment, and then said, clearly and incisively:

"Simon Stroker, you are a liar!"

With a shriek of rage that he could not repress, Stroker raised the pistol to strike the young man, when Mathew interposed and snatched the weapon from his hand.

"Not now, Stroker, because it wouldn't pay. Let him alone for a while. Things are coming our way now, and we can afford to let him talk. I've been called a liar often, but it never disturbs me particularly. You'll get used to it."

Simon Stroker turned to the detective again: "Now, you have stolen my horse. He is in the stable down there at the Hemlocks, and I am told that you took it away from my groom, here. You will have to stay here till I turn you over to the police."

"You are a cool one," answered Ben. "You have Miss Ruth's mare Fury somewhere, and until you show me where she is you won't get Badger."

Stroker laughed, as he said: "I don't think you are in a condition to make terms. We have you safe enough, and no one will even know where you are."

"That is true. Who could suspect that you are here, and who can help you?"

"I can!"

It was Ruth Slater that stood in the doorway between the kitchen and the stable, in her blue riding habit, with a flushed face, and bitter indignation in every feature.

CHAPTER XX.

A PLOT AGAINST RUTH.

The Race-Course Detective turned with pleasure when he heard the girl's voice.

"Ah, then, I hit ther truth!" he exclaimed. "It's all right, Miss Ruth. They hev' ther mare, an' we'll git it now. Of course you know that I'm not a horse thief. I wish you'd tell y'er uncle. I don't suppose he wants to keep me tied up here like a hobbled steer, when he hears you say that I'm all right."

"Of course he is all right, and I believe, as he does, that you have Fury here. Uncle, it is this wicked man, Simon Stroker, that is getting you to do wrong things, and I have no doubt that he has made you take Fury."

"Miss Ruth is mistaken," answered Stroker, trying to look and speak in a

pleasant manner. "I should be sorry to persuade Mr. Slater to do anything that would injure a lady whom I hope to—"

Battery Ben's eyes blazed as he saw the leering look that Stroker cast upon the girl, and he struggled hard to free himself from the rope.

As for Ruth, she looked at Stroker for a moment in a scornful way that might have crushed him had he been of a thin-skinned disposition. But he wasn't, and he still smiled, as he bowed, and tried to take her hand.

Slap! The girl struck him across the face with all her force, and would have given him another had not her uncle interposed.

"That settles it for the present, Miss Ruth," hissed Stroker. "I might have tried to save your mare, and have helped her to win the Handicap. Now, Badger shall win, and your miserable mare shall not even be in it."

"Thief!" was all the girl vouchsafed to reply, as she flew to the side of Battery Ben and tried to untie the knots.

Mathew pulled her away, roughly.

"No, Ruth. He must not go away. Let him alone."

"He is my friend, and I will not allow him to be abused," answered Ruth, hotly.

"Mathew, there is enough of this nonsense. Make Miss Ruth understand that she cannot dictate now. You are her guardian, and she is under your control."

"What do you mean?" asked the girl, her eyes sparkling with indignation.

Mathew could not meet her open gaze, but he answered, quietly:

"He means that thee must stay in this house for the present, while I attend to thy affairs. Thy behavior has been peculiar lately, and—and—and—"

"And what?" asked Ruth, as a terrible suspicion flashed across her mind.

"Well, I don't know whether thou art exactly sound in your mi—"

"What, do you mean that you will try to pretend that I am insane?"

"Take her inside, Mathew. You can see that she doesn't know what she is talking about," sneered Stroker.

Mathew placed his hands on his niece's shoulders, and in spite of her struggles, dragged her through the doorway into the kitchen and closed the door, while Battery Ben looked on in unspeakable horror at such villainy.

"She's decidedly insane," remarked Stroker. "Actually accuses her own uncle of theft."

"She's as mad as a March 'are," volunteered Rodney.

Battery Ben trembled in his wild desire to get free, if only for a moment, to strike Rodney and Stroker to the earth. But he was too securely tied for that, and the smile of superiority that Rodney gave him as he closed the stable door and followed Stroker into the house proved that his helpless position was appreciated by his enemies.

The door leading to the house closed, and Ben found himself tied so tightly that he could not do anything with his hands, walking about the stable in semi-darkness, wondering when and how this was all to end.

He saw that Ruth had fallen into a terrible plot, and that there was nothing to be hoped from the family feeling of Slater or the mercy of Stroker.

"They hev' ther girl, an' they can do ez they please with her. They will make her give up Fury, and p'raps let her uncle hev' all thet money he is trying to cheat her out of. What a fool I was not to take that tin box Pat told me about at the foot of that tree. Now, I s'pose it's too late. Pat even seems ter hev' gone back on me, an' mebbe he's taken the box with him."

The detective felt as if things were going decidedly wrong with him, and that he had few friends left. Then, with Ruth a prisoner in this house, and her uncle determined to prove her insane, what could he do? He had nothing to work on except suspicions, even if he

had been free, and he was not inclined to let the Central Police Office know anything about the affair, because he knew that no one could right the girl's wrongs so well as himself. No. He must do it, and although he was tied up in this stable, he would get back Fury, let her win the Handicap, and then force Mathew Slater to give up whatever he had belonging to his niece. As for the desire of Stroker to marry this young girl, to retrieve his own broken fortunes, that was too ridiculous for serious consideration.

While thinking, Ben had been walking uneasily up and down the stable, trying to make out whether there were any chances of his escaping, and more particularly looking to see whether there was any communication with the house.

His arms were tied tightly, but his legs were free, his captors not thinking it worth while to prevent his walking about, if it pleased him. The cords were cutting into his arms, however, and he began to feel a numbness in his fingers that warned him of the necessity of getting relief in some way.

He struggled, but the more he pulled on his bonds the tighter they seemed to become, to say nothing of their hurting his arms terribly.

"I can't do anything while I'm roped up in this hyar fashion," he muttered. "I must get them off, somehow."

His eyes had become accustomed to the gloom, and he could see pretty well now. The inside of the stable was lined with wood, and there were nails sticking in the walls in many places, but all were above his head.

The nails were used to hang harness, whips and other paraphernalia of a stable, and might not have suggested any solution of his difficulty, had he not been a young man accustomed to put things together, and to take advantage of anything that might, by the remotest possibility, be expected to help him.

He walked up and down, looking at the nails, feeling that they could be applied to his benefit, but unable, for a while, to settle in his own mind how. At last the idea struck him, as his eye fell upon a ladder in a corner, that was used, apparently, to get to a loft above the stable, and of which the trap door could be seen in a shadowy corner of the wooden, raftered ceiling.

Ben actually laughed aloud as he saw how he could use the nails with the aid of the ladder.

First he went to the door leading to the house, and stooped so that he could look through the keyhole. There was a short passage, or hall, between the kitchen and the stable, and this hall he saw to be empty, with the door of the kitchen closed.

"They may be in the kitchen, but they ain't in this hall, and they can't see what I'm going ter do."

Ben went to the ladder, and put his shoulder against it. He could not use it where it was, and it was necessary to move it to the other end of the stable.

"It's a durned heavy thing," he said to himself, "and I'm thinking I'll have trouble to get it where I want it, to say nothing of the noise I'm likely to make. However, it doesn't matter about thet thar'. I'd rather hev' trouble right now with them skunks than stick here for another hour tied up like this, with these hyer cussed cords running inter my arms."

He gave the ladder a hard shove, and over it went, flat on the floor. It did not make any particular noise beyond a slight rattle, and Ben did not fear that it would be heard in the house. He waited a minute to see whether anybody came, and then came the task of getting it upright against the wall opposite that from which he had displaced it. He wanted to get it by the side of a nail from which the head had been knocked, and which therefore offered a sharp point. It was pretty high, but Ben saw that, by climbing the ladder he could reach it in the way that it might be useful in his present predicament.

It was not an easy thing to raise the lad-

der, with his arms bound to his side, but, after a good many attempts and sundry bruises, from the ladder dropping upon him when he had pretty well got it up, he had the satisfaction at last of seeing it resting against the wall, close to the nail with the sharp point.

It is not an easy thing to climb a ladder with one's arms tied down, but the detective soon did it, and then it could be seen why he had been working so hard to get the ladder to that particular place.

Leaning forward from the ladder, and holding on with one of his hands, he brought the knot in the halter that had been fastened in the middle of his chest against the point, and began to pick it open.

"They thought they were pretty smart, but they can't get away with Battery Ben by such a baby thing as tying his arms," he muttered, as he saw, with a thrill of satisfaction, that the knot was beginning to yield.

He was ten minutes at work on the knot before the halter dropped, and then, as he found himself free, he stretched his arms, while still on the ladder, and felt that he could defy the whole combination of enemies that had been rejoicing over his downfall a short time ago.

Ben wasted no time, now that his hands were free. He was determined to rescue Miss Ruth from the dangerous position in which she stood, and then bring Mathew Slater's crime home to him without loss of time.

"He murdered that old man, Lenz, I'm sure, an' he's trying ter beat the girl out of her money. But he'll find that Battery Ben is taking a hand in the game, too. Miss Ruth shall have all that belongs to her, and she shall win the Brooklyn Handicap with Fury, too."

The lock that secured the door leading to the house was not a good one, and, after looking at his six-shooter to make sure that it was in good order and ready to his hand in the belt around his waist under his coat, the detective knocked a nail out of the wall and picked the lock of the door in a workmanlike manner.

In an incredibly short space of time he was in the kitchen, and then, finding no one there, he went through the whole lower part of the house. Not a soul was there. Up-stairs, and cautiously into each room. No one in any of them.

"Hello! This is strange! So the rascals have thrown me off the scent, have they? Wal, I guess not! They've taken the girl away, but 'll find her, ez I will Fury, the mare. Brace up, Battery Ben! This is the time thet you'll hev' ter show that your record ez a detective is something more than a bluff. Whar hev' they gone? Why, to New York, of course. Thet's ther only place ter hide any one, an', of course, they mean ter keep thet girl out of ther way till they can either make her do what they want about ther mare, an' ther property, or until Badger hez won ther Handicap and made 'em both independent in money matters. It's ez cl'ar ez daylight."

Ben opened the side door of the dining-room leading to the porch outside, and as he did so he stumbled over something that was immediately outside the door.

The something was alive, for it butted into Ben's chest, and at the same moment demanded, in querulous tones:

"Oh, bag ye'r head! Come off der grass! What der yer t'ink I am—a roller-skatin' rink?"

"Hello, Snap."

"Hello, ye'rself! W'ot's bitin' yer? Why ain't yer down at der crib, 'tendin' to business? If it wasn't for me, we wouldn't have no show on d'is earth."

"Whar did you come from?" asked Ben.

"Where do yer t'ink I come from—der moon? D'ere was a mug come up to der house d'ere, de Hemlocks, wi'd a letter addressed to you. I did not know de writin', but I nailed it as a t'ing sent from Pat McGlone, an' I jist got on de trolley car, an' come up here wi'd it."

"Whar is it?"

"Don't git de yellor fever over it. It's in de pocket of me frock, 'mong me hair-pins an' bridge tickets. Hold yer hosses, now."

The detective was impatient to know,

what Pat McGlone had to say, especially under the circumstances, but Snap was not to be hurried; he fumbled in his pockets with provoking deliberation, grinning at Ben meanwhile. At last he fished out the letter, that was in a dirty envelope, with Ben's name squeezed up in one corner. The note itself was folded tightly into a small space not much larger than a postage stamp, and Battery Ben could not open it fast enough for his impatience. At last he spread it out, and was reading it with knitted brows.

"It's the cusseddest writin'," he muttered. Then, as he managed to decipher it, and the full meaning burst upon him, he cried, hurriedly and excitedly: "Come, Snap!" and sped down the road toward the place where a side thoroughfare led to the place from which the trolley cars started for Thirty-ninth street, Brooklyn. "What's struck him now, I wonder," gasped Snap, as he set his short legs going and ran after the detective.

CHAPTER XXI.

A RAILROAD RACE.

Not a word did Ben speak, as he sat in the trolley car, with Snap by his side, and sped along toward Brooklyn. Nor did he speak, save to tell Snap to keep with him, when he entered the ferry house, rode across the bay in the ferryboat to the Battery, and then hurriedly got on a Sixth Avenue "L" train to go to Cortlandt Street.

It was when they reached the Jersey City station of the Pennsylvania Railroad that the position of Battery Ben as a detective on special duty became of use to him.

Snap was left in the waiting-room, and Ben disappeared for a time. When he came back, he told Snap to follow him, and the two made their way through the network of rails in the railroad yards till they were entirely clear of the train shed.

"Say, Ben, what's this here picnic you're givin' us? You ain't a goin' ter buy no railroad, are yer? If yer do, remember, I want my private observation car, wi'd a coon ter cook me meals, or I don't play in de game."

Snap grinned as he said this, but there was no responsive smile from Ben. He had too much on his mind just then.

"See hyar, Snap," he said, impressively. "This is the time thet we've got to get that mare, an' save Miss Ruth from considerable trouble. Do you understand?"

Snap winked as he answered:

"Do I understand? What do yer take me for? Can a duck swim? Of course I understand. D'ese yer' mugs has stolen de mare, an' dey are tryin' ter steal de gyurl. Dat's de whole business. Well, we are chasin' after de mare and gyurl. D'ey have gone ter Philadelphia, an' we are goin' after 'em. See? Do I understand? Well, I should chew a lemon."

"You must hev' read my letter, then?"

Snap looked a little uneasy, but his natural effrontery came to his aid, as he answered:

"Well, I'm in de business of tryin' ter straighten out de murder of me old boss, an' it's necessary fer me to know what's going on, ain't it?"

"Don't you know it's er States prison offense ter open another man's letter?" inquired Ben, severely.

"Not unless it comes t'rough de United States mail. Don't try ter give me no sich game as d'at. Besides, I'm a lawyer, an' lawyers is privileged," answered Snap, with his usual wink.

Ben did not take the trouble to argue the point, for at this moment Pat McGlone came from behind a great locomotive that was steaming away on the track, and talked earnestly to the young detective in such low tones that Snap could not hear them, although he was nearly dying with curiosity.

The two walked to the side of Snap, and Ben went on, continuing the conversation:

"So the train hez a good start of us, and unless we can catch it before it gets ter Philadelphia we might ez well give up, eh, Pat?"

"Don't give nothin' up. No mug as amounts to nothin' never gives nothing

up," broke in Snap, scattering negatives in all directions in an appalling fashion.

"Be the powers, the kid is roight, Oi'm thinkin', an' Oi don't give nothin' up, while there's a chance," said Pat.

"Very well, then, Pat. All aboard!"

Before Snap realized what the detective meant, Ben had swung himself into the cab of the engine by his side, and was in conversation with the engineer in a familiar manner, as if he had known him from childhood.

"Git up there, kid," commanded Pat, giving Snap a shove, and half-lifting him into the cab. He followed himself, and, before Snap had recovered his breath, the engineer had pulled the throttle, and the engine was bumping over the switches and swinging so that Snap had all he could attend to to keep himself from falling into the firebox or out of the cab altogether.

"Say, young feller, you keep out of the way, will you?" said the fireman, as he opened the door of the fire-box and shoveled in the coal with a great noise and bustle.

Snap saw that this was not a time to make remarks, so he wisely held his tongue and shrank into a corner, while Pat obeyed the fireman's glance and took his seat on the left side of the cab.

Ben was standing immediately behind the engineer, a stout, red-faced man, with big whiskers, whose eyes were turned straight ahead.

There was nothing but the engine and tender, and the engine rocked terribly as it went over the switches of the yard toward the straight track that loomed ahead of them. They were on the freight rails and every signal was set for "Go ahead."

It was just becoming dusk, and the journey was to be made by the aid of signal lamps, for it was too dark to see the arms of the signals that served during the daylight.

It may be explained that the situation was just this: The detective had arranged for a special engine to try to catch the Philadelphia fast freight, consisting of eight freight cars and a caboose, that had left for Philadelphia an hour ago.

"Ninety miles," observed the detective. "And the other train has an hour's start. That means that we have got to make at least sixty miles an hour if we are going to catch that train before it gets into Philadelphia."

"Yes, quite that," acquiesced the engineer. "They are doing thirty miles an hour, and they could do better than that if they thought it necessary. Travel is not particularly heavy just at this time, for some reason, and I don't suppose they will be held anywhere. Of course they might be. And, on the other hand, so might we."

Ben frowned involuntarily as he thought of the possibility of their being held by signal somewhere before they caught the train they were pursuing, but his brow cleared instantly as he made up his mind that it would be better not to try to cross the bridge till they came to it.

"There is no profit in borrowing trouble," he observed, quietly, and Pat McGlone nodded approvingly.

Now the engine, with its tender, had cleared the switches and was fairly on its way. The lights of Jersey City were in the rear, and they had got away from the marshes and rivers that cluster about the city and make the approach to New York by the Pennsylvania Railroad anything but attractive.

"Shove on the coal, Bob," grunted the engineer, from the depths of his big whiskers, as he looked at the steam and water gauges, and saw that everything was all right for a good run.

The fireman was a young man, with broad shoulders, a smooth face, and grimy hands. He handled the shovel as if it had been a bamboo rod, and the coal rattled as he scooped it out and threw it far into the blazing maw of the furnace.

"Say, what yer givin' us?" demanded Snap. "What do yer t'ink I am—hot tamale? Don't be so fresh wi'd d'at fire."

The fireman grinned, as he shoveled Snap up with the coal, and tripped him over into Pat McGlone's lap.

"Say, don't be gay," squeaked Snap. "You'll land me in de road, de first t'ing you know, an' d'en d'ere'll be a suit fer damages d'at will bu'st de road. See?"

More coal into the furnace, without any answer, and then the engineer opened the throttle a little wider, and the engine seemed to jump forward like a horse touched by the spur.

"Newark!"

They flashed through the station, with the people standing for a minute to watch the engine whisking through the town, and Pat noticed that the street cars were waiting for the engine to go by, and that the business of the place was virtually paralyzed for the moment.

But even while he looked and thought thus, the engine, rocking like a ship in a storm, had got into the darkness again, and Newark was only a memory.

"I'll let her out after a while, and then I'll show you some speed," remarked the engineer, in a low tone, to the detective.

"Let her out," exclaimed Snap, who had overheard the remark. "What do yer call d'is here? D'is is as fast traveling as I ever done."

The fireman opened the furnace door again, and shoveled some more coal in, as he said, contemptuously:

"This ain't nothin'. We ain't begun to go yet. We aint' doin' more than forty-five miles an hour."

The engine seemed to jump clear of the rails at every spring forward, and only those that have ridden on an engine going at the rate of forty-five miles an hour can thoroughly understand what an exciting thing it is. There was no train to ballast the engine, as it were, and when she jumped, she jumped.

"We must make it," said the detective, as he held to the side of the cab and tried to peer into the darkness through the window. "There is a mare and a girl on that other train, and we must have them."

The engineer may have wondered what the detective meant by coupling a mare and a girl in that peculiar way, but he had not time to inquire anything about it, even if he had considered it any of his business. He was watching the lights that they passed at various intervals, and so long as they were white he knew that he was all right.

But he also knew that a green or red light was likely to show at any moment, and he must be ready at the throttle to take instant warning. There is no time for talk or wonderment for an engineer who is driving along at the rate of a mile a minute or thereabouts.

Along they went, with the fireman putting in his coal, until everything seemed to be red-hot. Steam was hissing in all directions, and the smell of oil was almost overpowering to the passengers, who were not used to it. Then the engineer said, in a matter-of-fact way, as he looked forward, and saw white lights ahead:

"I'll give old 5,006 a chance to show what she can do now."

He pulled the lever, and the response came on the instant, in a jump that made Snap fall against the fireman, and then tumble over upon Pat.

The rattle, rattle, rattle of the engine came quicker, and there was a strained feeling in the machine that seemed to communicate itself to everybody aboard.

The telegraph poles that came into view for the merest speck of an instant and then vanished, showed quicker and quicker, as they caught the light of the engine, and disappeared, and the clicking over the joints of the rails that could be discerned plainly, no matter how fast they travelled, began to sound like the whirr of machinery, or the winding up of a gigantic Waterbury watch.

"What are we doing?" asked the detective, as he looked at his watch, and then at the steam gauge.

"Sixty miles an hour," was the engineer's quiet reply. "And we can do better than that when we get beyond Elizabeth. Ah, there she is now, just ahead."

As he spoke a mass of white lights appeared in the thick darkness ahead, and a moment later they whisked into the midst of them, and then, before they had com-

posed themselves for a run, saw the red and green lights in a cluster behind them, with the confused idea that they had seen a well-lighted station of red brick, and somebody standing on a foot-bridge, looking at them, as they whirled by in a cloud of steam and red light.

"Now I'll show you something," whispered the engineer, looking over at Snap, who had just caught a mouthful of coal dust while the fireman fed the fire, and was trying to brush some of it from his coat.

The engineer looked carefully at his steam gauge and water gauge, and, bracing himself firmly on his feet, pulled the lever a little more.

Heavens! How the ponderous machine did leap. Bang—bang—bang—bang! Whirr—r—r—r! S—S—S—s—s—s—sh! Z—z—z—z—z—z—z! Clack—ck—ck—ck—ck—ck—ck!

The fireman worked harder than ever, and Snap was kept jumping as if he were an electric toy, in keeping out of the way of the active young man who was feeding the furnace to keep up the tremendous head of steam necessary.

"What is it now?" asked the detective.

"We made five miles in four minutes," answered the engineer, as he kept his eye fixed ahead, and held the lever with a steady grip.

"That's more than seventy miles an hour," observed Battery Ben.

"Yes, but we cannot keep that up."

"I suppose not, but we will average sixty miles an hour, won't we?"

"Yes. We will make Philadelphia in an hour and a half from the time we left Jersey City, barring accidents."

"That should bring us there at nine o'clock."

"Yes."

"What's this place ahead?"

"Trenton."

It was. The great, busy city, where so many operatives get a living, marry and die, was in their path, and they slackened a little as they went through it, although even then, with a forty miles an hour speed, they could hardly be said to linger and there was no time for Snap to shake hands with any of the crowd on the platform, as they passed, although he looked as if he would like to have stopped a while to do so, and inquire how things were in the city.

"What's that ahead?" suddenly asked Battery Ben, as he strained his eyes through the window.

The engineer smiled, and nodded to the fireman to put on more coal, while Snap waited to hear what the reply would be to the detective's query.

The engineer was looking, and of course knew what the two red lights that had just come into view meant.

"It's the other train—the train we're after," he answered, shortly.

"I thought so," said Battery Ben. "Now, we'll hev' these hyar fellers, an' Fury will go right back, to win ther Brooklyn Handicap!"

The engineer had carefully regulated the speed of his engine, so that it should gradually catch up to the train. He saw that there was a quickening of speed on the part of the train, and that the red lights began to grow dim, showing that the train was drawing away from him.

"That's Jim Downs," observed the engineer, with a grim smile. "But if he has an idea he can walk away from old 5006, especially when he has a train behind him, and I haven't, he is in error. I'll soon show him."

Thus speaking, he threw back the lever, and the engine made one of those fierce jumps with which Ben had become familiar during the ride, and the red lights became bigger and brighter as the engine overhauled the train, hand over hand.

"Now, Mr. Stroker and Mr. Slater, you'll find that Battery Ben is with yer," muttered the detective, as he saw how scientifically the engineer was creeping up toward the other train.

Pat McGlone stood silently watching the red lights, but Snap, with his accustomed volatile manner, could not keep still, and was continually getting in the way of

the fireman, and being shoved first one way and then the other by the mischievous fireman.

Suddenly there was an exclamation from the engineer, as he threw the lever forward with a jerk, and whistled loudly for "Brakes!"

Too late! There was a confused noise, like grinding and smashing, then a tremendous crash, like a discharge of artillery, and the engine had jumped into the middle of a wreck of freight cars and a cloud of steam.

CHAPTER XXII.

FURY MAKES GOOD TIME.

It is some time after the events detailed in the preceding chapters, and the sun is shining brightly on the Brighton Beach track and stables where Fury was first introduced to the reader.

The stable door is half open, and Fury is inside, while, instead of Jim Rodney and Simon Stroker, to look at her, she is attended by Battery Ben and Pat McGlone.

"Yes, be gob, Bin, it is a wondher, whin yer come ter think of it, thot the mare is here, ready for the race to-morrer, afther all them fellers throid to git her away. Whin the smash-up came on the railroad thot noight, faith Oi thought Oi wuz kilt enthirely, so Oi did, an' Oi niver thought the mare could live through it. Yit, here wuz the mare all right, barrin' a little shock ter her narvous system, an' be the same token, there wuz thot Stroker an' thot Shlater, both all roight in the caboose. Begorra, Oi don't undherstand now how it is we wuz not all kilt."

"It was because we had a good engineer, and he had slacked up so much that when the engine ran into the rear of the other train the crash was not so bad as it would have been. That open switch was the cause of the whole trouble. I guess it was done by tramps, who wanted to rob the train when it got smashed. A freight train off the track does not count for much, anyhow, you know, although it may mean the loss of a brakeman's life, of course. But what worries me is that we have never seen anything of Miss Ruth. She was not on that train, although I was sure we should find her in the caboose, and I should like to know where they are keeping her."

"Why don't you arrest Mathew Slater on suspicion?"

"Of what? He says his niece has gone away to visit friends, and what right hev' I to doubt his word?"

It was noticeable that when Ben became excited he dropped his Western dialect, just as Mathew Slater eschewed the Quaker expressions when he was much in earnest.

"Faith, Oi beelave he's kapin' her somewhere so thot he kin hov' the use of her money. You know phwat yez heerd him say thot day they tied yez up in the house beyant, an' Oi'm thinkin' thot yez might take him an' Stroker both in on account of thot bit of business."

"Yes, I could, but I won't—at least, not now. The Brooklyn Handicap is to be run to-morrow, and I'm going to see that it is won by Fury. Miss Ruth is sure to come back some time, because I will not rest till I find her, and her heart is set on seein' Fury win that race. It is not money with her, but just pride in the little mare."

"An' she's right, fer the mare is a beauty," observed Pat, as he stepped up to Fury, cautiously, and stroked her shoulder, while the mare looked at him out of the corner of her eye as if uncertain whether to kick out at him or not.

"They have the Badger in good shape, I'm told."

"Yis. Oi hoven't seen him meself, but Oi ondherstand ez they hov' ivery expectation of pulling off this race with him, an' Mathew Shlater is ez mad ez a wet hen 'cause you are going to run Fury. He sez it's his niece's mare, he sez, an' he'll shtop you runnin' her, he sez, but it's only talk. Yez hov' her written order for phwat yez are goin' ter do, an' it'll take more than the loikes uv Mathew Shlater ter shtop yez runnin'

ther mare, especially whin yez hov' Pat McGlone at the back of yez, d'ye moind."

The detective shook hands with the warm-hearted Irishman, and looked over the mare with an expression of satisfaction as he saw how fit she was for the great struggle in which she was to participate on the morrow.

"I suppose that Jim Rodney will ride Badger?" he asked.

"Yis. He's been trainin' down, an' he's got roight down to weight. He's a good rounder, an' Oi know ez he'll take every ounce out of the horse, whin he once gits shtarted. Thot is, if Badger is meant to win," he added, significantly.

"Oh, they mean Badger to win," observed the detective. "They have a great deal of money on him, and it means ruin or wealth for both of them. You know, I have got a trace of that will, and I think I can put my hands on it with a little trouble."

"Faith, Oi don't know about thot. W'in I caught thot fellow Slyme thot day and t'uk the mare away from him, Oi tackled him about the wull thot he hod in the tin box, an' he laughed at me, an' threw it into the river, wull an' all."

"Are you sure the will was in the box?"

"Indade Oi am thot, fer the blayguard opened the box so Oi could see the paper in it, an' then he chucked it overboard, an' the ould paper fluttered out of it, an' Oi saw it on the top of the wather fer a minute, before it got all soaked, and went down."

"Um! That's bad," mused the detective. "You never told me that before and I thought if I could get hold of Slyme. I should be able to put my hand on the will."

"Well, phwy shouldn't we arrist Sam Slyme? He committed larceny, onyhov, an' Oi t'ink I can foind him. Oi hov' an idea phwere he hangs out."

"Be patient, Pat. Let's win this race with Fury, and then we can attend to all the other business. Bring her out."

Battery Ben threw off his coat, and showed himself in his customary blue flannel sailor shirt. He fastened a pair of spurs to his shoes, and took a jockey cap, with its long peak to shade the eyes, together with a riding whip, that he looped over his wrist.

In the mean time, Pat McGlone had been busy with Fury. He saddled and bridled her, and looked well to her girths. Then he examined the saddle-cloth, and saw that it was smoothly adjusted, so that there could be no irritation, and then, as he stroked her, and looked into her eyes, he could not help giving way to his admiration.

"Bin, she's a picter'. She's as gentle as a baby, an' as purty as any gurl Oi iver saw in ould Athlone, so she is. Och, Fury, darlint, yez must win the Handicap, so ye must, or Oi'll niver spake wi'd yez ag'in. Yez hear me."

The mare tossed her head as if she really understood the words addressed to her, and Pat led her out into the open.

They had the track to themselves entirely, and for that reason Ben was anxious to try something about what she could do, although he did not mean to press her to her top speed.

Ben looked about him, to be sure that they were not watched, because every one knows that the necessity of secrecy with a favorite racehorse is regarded carefully by every one connected with the track. As for Badger, his doings had been kept so quiet since the horse had been returned to his owners, upon Ben obtaining possession of Fury, on that night that there was a smash-up on the railroad, and when Fury was being spirited away to Philadelphia, that no one knew anything about the mare's principal rival except a few close friends. As a consequence, Fury was the favorite in the betting, because she was known to be fast and in good condition, and it was regarded as a safe thing to bet on her.

As she stood on the track, trembling with impatience, her high-strung, nervous nature showing in every twitching movement, Ben felt a thrill of pride that he

was likely to win the great race for Miss Ruth, and prove to her that, even in her absence, she could depend upon her wishes being carried out faithfully.

A leg up, and Ben sat on the back of the mare, his firm, easy seat, as natural as if he were in a chair, and his soothing hand on the reins, as he spoke softly to the magnificent creature beneath him, showing that he was a horseman in every sense of the word, besides being a detective whose value was well understood by his superiors.

Pat ran along the track and covered the whole distance, while Ben restrained the impatience of the mare, and allowed her to canter gently after.

Once or twice Pat removed an infinitesimal stick or stone from the smooth track, and looked back at Ben with a shake of his head, as if to call his attention to the dangers that might lurk in his path, but Ben only smiled at Pat's enthusiasm, and pulled himself well together for the run around the track when they should have covered it once at a canter.

At last they were around, and then Pat stood to one side to watch the gallop.

"You may as well hold the watch, Pat," said Ben, as he took from his pocket a magnificent gold stop-watch, with split seconds, so that the exact time might be taken. "I shan't force her, but we may as well see what she does."

Ben set the mare going, arranging it so that she should be at full gallop when she passed the judge's stand.

Pat yelled with delight as the mare swept by, and at the same time set the watch, so that he could see the time she would make around the track. He watched her as she flew around, her jockey keeping her under perfect control, and letting her out as she reached the home-stretch, in a fine burst of speed.

"Hurroo!" yelled Pat, as the mare came past the stand, where he was holding the watch as carefully as if a kingdom depended upon his accuracy. "Hurroo!"

Ben pulled up the mare in a few strides and cantered her back gently.

"Well, Pat, what did we do?"

"Yez did the mile in 1:42—divil a bit more, an' yez can do it in 1:41, if yez want to. Moind phwat Oi tell yez, the mare is all roight, an' Oi don't care whether she gits inter fast company or not, she'll show them fellers something to-morrow, or my name isn't Pat McGlone."

Ben jumped down from the mare's back, and patted her on the shoulder affectionately. He felt that the mare was safe for the race, because he knew that he had not forced her at all, and that she had done the mile with plenty to spare. Unless something unforeseen occurred, there could be no doubt that Fury would be the winner of the Brooklyn Handicap. He had not seen Badger for the last two weeks, but he was sure the horse could not compare with the little mare, no matter how much he might have improved.

"Yes, Miss Ruth, the Brooklyn Handicap is yours, as sure as the sun rises to-morrow, and if I only knew where to find you, so that you could see the race, I should be satisfied. But I will find you, and within a week, too. Stroker and Slater are smart men, but they can't get away with Ben."

He was startled by a cry of rage from Pat McGlone, and, turning quickly, he just caught sight of Mathew Slater's yellow face disappearing from the top of the fence immediately opposite the judge's stand, but on the other side of the enclosure.

"The dhirty blayguard! Oi'm wagerin' thot he hez seen the whole trial," exclaimed Pat McGlone, as he led Fury into the stable.

"Well, what matter if he has, Pat? Fury will win, and he can't stop it now. If he did see her run, he saw a pretty gallop, and it will not make him feel any better when he goes up to Sheepshead, or wherever he has Badger, and looks at his own horse, that is going to be badly licked to-morrow."

And the detective's philosophy pleased Pat McGlone so much that he actually laughed aloud as he removed the saddle

from Fury and rubbed her down with the care of a young mother washing her first baby.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ANOTHER SHOCK FOR MATHEW.

While Fury was being tried and watched so carefully at Brighton Beach, Stroker and Slater were giving their time and attention to their horse, Badger. They had tried hard to get possession of Fury, to keep her out of the race, but though they had held the cards in their hands once or twice, they had been unable to play them well enough to destroy Fury's chances.

"We were both cussed fools, Mathew, that we didn't fix the mare when we had her in that train, two weeks ago," remarked Simon Stroker, as he stood at the door of Badger's stable and looked at the horse in some doubt.

Jim Rodney was busy rubbing down the horse, and was apparently not thinking about anything else, but he was really listening to the conversation with all the intentness of his inquisitive nature.

"Well, friend Stroker, how were we to know that that confounded young fellow would come running after us on an engine in the way he did? If I had suspected it for a moment I would have arranged it so that he would not have been in fit condition to ride on an engine, or anything else."

Although Mathew ostensibly belonged to the sect that is pledged to peace, there was a vindictiveness in the way he said this that showed how willing he would have been to do Battery Ben such injury as would have put an end to his career altogether. Mathew could not wear the mask with his associates all the time, although he contrived to keep up the fiction of his being a good man pretty well, too.

"You ought to have suspected it," grumbled Simon Stroker, as he walked up and down in front of the stable moodily.

"Yes, I ought, but I didn't," rejoined the sport, with some asperity in his tone, for he felt that he was not entirely to blame for the present unfortunate condition of affairs.

"You see what sort of a fix we are in now," growled Stroker, as he looked discontentedly at Badger. "We may win with this horse, but I don't think we can count Fury out altogether."

"Of course we can't. She did a mile in 1:42 this morning without trouble," observed the Quaker Sport.

"How do you know?"

"In the best of all ways: I saw her do it."

There was a mournful ring in Slater's voice as he said this that would have made Stroker smile if he had not been too much interested to indulge in any levity, and it was apparent that Mathew considered the situation decidedly dangerous.

"That cuss of a Ben Ward is goin' to ride, I s'pose?" put in Rod.

"Yes," answered the Quaker, forgetting to snub Rodney in the interest of the discussion. "He gave the mare her gallop this morning, and I see that he is right down to the weight, and is all ready for the fun to-morrow."

"Bli' me if I wouldn't like to pay 'im out for w'ot 'e's done to me," said Rodney, vindictively. "'E's been pickin' at me an' tryin' ter git the best of me ever since I've been 'ere, an' now 'e thinks 'e can show me 'ow to ride."

Slater looked significantly at Stroker, as he said, mildly:

"Friend Rodney, thee has been agrieved by this young man, but if thee will be faithful to Simon Stroker and me, it will be of much profit to thee."

"W'ot do you mean?"

The Quaker Sport looked all about him to make sure that there was nobody to listen to him but Rodney and Stroker, and hissed in the stableman's ear:

"Don't let Ben Ward win the race, even if you have to break his neck!"

Rodney had been rubbing down Badger, but now he dropped his cloth and brush and came out into the open air, where he could look the speaker straight in the face. Then he asked, slowly, and in a trembling tone, as if he could hardly be-

lieve the suggestion he had already received from the other:

"What do you mean?"

Mathew smiled that fishy smile of his, and, tossing his head, carelessly answered:

"Ask Mr. Stroker."

Rodney looked at Simon Stroker, who turned swiftly upon Mathew, and growled:

"What are you talking about? I am not in any of your devilish schemes. If you have any arrangement to make with this fellow, Rod, make it yourself, but don't try to drag me into it."

"Simon Stroker, thee is hard to understand," protested the Quaker, with a sneering smile.

"Am I? Well, it doesn't matter. You understand me, at all events."

"Tell the man what you mean."

Slater beckoned Rodney to him, and whispered something in his ear. Rodney started back in dismay as he said:

"That's a bloomin' nice thing to say to a sportsman, ain't it? I dun'no' what you mean. Blow me if I do."

"Oh, yes, thee does, Rodney, and thee will do what I want thee, I think," remarked Slater, with his fishy smile once more.

Rodney did not answer, but he went back to rubbing down Badger, while Mathew leaned against the doorpost, watching him, satisfied that he would carry his point, and with a grin upon his yellow face.

Rodney brought out Badger soon afterward, without replying directly to Slater's hints, and then the morning gallop took place. It is needless to describe it in detail. Rodney could ride well, in spite of his having been thrown on one or two occasions, as the reader knows, and when he and Badger went spinning around the mile track at a smooth, steady gallop, with no sign of a break anywhere, Simon Stroker felt a sort of exultation, and hoped more strongly than ever that Badger would retrieve his fortunes by pulling off the biggest "event" of the spring meetings, as the Brooklyn Handicap is allowed to be.

"That'll do, Rod. Take him into the stable and rub him down," he said, as Rodney pulled up and trotted slowly back toward where the two owners were standing. "You did pretty well, and I only hope you'll ride as true and straight to-morrow."

"Oh, I'll be there," answered Rod, with a confident grin. "If there's any chance at all, you'll see me bring Badger in at the 'ead, or I'll know why."

Rodney led the horse inside, and Slater, with his stop-watch still in his hand, turned toward Stroker, and muttered:

"It was a good mile, friend Stroker. He did it in 1:42. I don't think Fury beat that. In fact, by my time, it was exactly what she made. But they didn't take everything out of her, any more than Rod did out of Badger. It is going to be a very close thing."

"Well, it is the chance we take," answered Stroker, with affected carelessness, as he strolled toward the gate. "I have business in town, Slater. You stay around here and keep your eye on Badger for the rest of the day. There is nothing like the proprietors being on deck all the time. I don't trust employees—not even so good a one as Rod."

He did not condescend to say any more, but, taking up his bicycle, that was standing near the gate, he sped away at a good round pace, almost before Slater knew that he had gone.

Slater watched Rodney poking about Badger, and at last, when the horse was made comfortable, with his corn before him, and a comfortable bed under him, if he should care to lie down, Rodney, with a huge straw in his mouth, champed away at it, and looked admiringly at the horse.

"You want to go and get some dinner, eh, Rod?"

"Yes, I think I could pick a bit, with a glass of good English porter; but I can't leave Badger."

"I'll watch Badger till you come back," answered Slater.

Rodney expected that he would do this, but he pretended to be rather surprised

and grateful as he put on his corduroy coat and unbuckled his spurs.

"Thankee, sir. Much obliged, I'm sure. Badger won't need much watchin'. 'E's all right. 'Is mornin' gallop 'as done 'im good, an' if the bloomin' flies will only let 'im alone, 'e'll be as fresh as paint when he starts out in the mornin'. I won't be long."

Thus Rod talked himself out of the stable and out of the gate of the track, which Slater took care to lock and bolt after the groom, for there was no one else in the whole place now, save one or two grooms, who were locked up in the stables with their respective horses, none of whom were likely to be heard of in the race to-morrow, even if they should start.

Slater went into the stable with Badger, and fastened the door. He wanted to think over his affairs, and he could not conceive of a better place than this stable.

"Ruth cannot be kept out of sight much longer," he reflected, "and I may as well make up my mind to do something with her that will keep her quiet and satisfy those meddling fools that think they have a right to interfere in her affairs and mine. That will! If I only knew where it was. It was dropped into the North River, Sam Slyme says, and I have no reason to suppose that he lies, particularly as it has not been brought up to face me, as it would if Pat McGlone had it. And then there is old Lenz alway coming before me, with the white face, the red mark at the back of his neck, and all the horror of that office. Well, why should I care for it? It was not my fault that the old man died. Who is there that could say I had anything to do with it? Who is there, I say?"

The sport repeated this question defiantly, although he was alone, save for Badger, and it seemed to give him pleasure to do so, as if it were a relief to his mind.

The stable was so gloomy that he could only just distinguish the horse in the corner, lazily munching his corn, and there were deep shadows at the other end, where it was almost as black as night. Only one window—a very small one—lighted the room, and that was barred across and across with thick iron beams that assisted the dirty glass in keeping out the light. It was not likely that a stable in which horses worth many thousands of dollars were to be kept would be left so that people could easily get into it, and light was a secondary consideration, because the horses would get all the light necessary in the day through the doorway, and at night there was no light, anyhow.

Slater preferred to sit in the gloom, in the midst of his reflections, and he had not thought it worth while to light the gas-jet just over his head. He sat on a low stool, with his chin resting in his hands, when he made this remark: "Who can say that I had anything to do with the death of Emil Lenz?"

"I can!"

With a shriek of horror Mathew Slater threw himself flat upon his face, and fairly writhed in awful terror.

The voice was that of Emil Lenz, and at the moment that it broke the stillness Mathew Slater saw, in a faint halo of yellow light, like that which had frightened him so much on the night of the thunder-storm, the face of the old lawyer, with the wide-open eyes fixed upon him!

CHAPTER XXIV.

READY FOR THE START.

It was a beautiful, bright day, and the Brooklyn track was as glorious a scene as any one could wish to enjoy, with the bright colors of the jockeys, the horses rushing hither and thither, and the thousands of spectators in the grand stand and around the railing.

It was the day of the Brooklyn Handicap.

There had been two or three unimportant races, and the bookmakers had been active adjusting their losses and receiving their winnings, while the average spectator, who was not there to gamble, but to enjoy the sport, was waiting for the great race of the day.

There were a good many entries, as usual, but they had dwindled down, so that it was not likely that more than eight or ten horses would actually start. The two favorites, Fury and Badger, were in everybody's mouth, and no one seemed to think that the other horses had any chance at all.

"Phwat do yez think about the mare?" asked a stout, jolly-looking woman, who had obtained a comfortable seat in the grand stand, and who was evidently determined to get all the pleasure out of the day that was possible.

"Oi t'ink, Mrs. Ward, thot there's no doubt she'll win. Badger isn't in it, d'ye mind. You watch, an' see whether Pat McGlone isn't roight."

"Indade, an' it's meself thot hopes you are roight, fer me b'ye, Bin, is to roide her, an' Oi don't care ter hov' any one of the name of Ward do anything but win."

Mrs. Ward was holding a huge pair of field glasses to her eyes as she spoke, and was trying to make out her son among the group of jockeys and others around the stables.

"Oi don't see me b'ye. Do you, Miss Van Corten?"

Miss Euphemia Van Corten was sitting by the side of Mrs. Ward, for she felt as if she owed it to the absent Ruth to see her favorite win, and she only hoped that the girl would soon be with her again, to hear from her lips that the mare had been victorious. She had been told that Ruth was perfectly safe in Philadelphia, and had had one letter from her to that effect, with an injunction not to say anything about where she was, what she was doing, and, in fact, not to speak about it to any one, so that she was as worried about the girl as Ben and others who did not know where she was.

"Ah! There's me b'ye!" suddenly burst from Mrs. Ward, as Battery Ben appeared among the group of men that moved about near the stable door, and entered into earnest conversation with Pat McGlone by signals—or so it seemed to Mrs. Ward.

"Phwat does he want, Pat?" she asked, as she kept her field glass fixed steadily upon the young man.

"He wants me," was Pat's sententious response, as he got up from his seat, and, with a smile and a nod for Mrs. Ward, ran across to the spot at which Battery Ben was standing.

"Phwat is it, Bin?" he asked, as he gave Snap a shove to one side and shook hands with Ben.

"Why, Pat, I'm not quite easy about this hyar thing," whispered Ben. "Those fellers are desperate, an' they don't mean ter let Fury win, if they can help it."

"But they can't help it," said Pat. "Oi'll be here, an' if Oi see onything crooked, Oi'll smash thot Mathew Slater, an' thin stuff him down the t'roat uv Simon Stroker, d'ye moind?"

"D'at's d'e talk. Swipe him one on the cheek bone. D'at's the t'ing. I'll do it meself, see?"

"Git out!" was Pat McGlone's hasty command, and again Snap was sent spinning across the sward, an operation that he did not mind, for he was used to it.

"How's the mare, Bin? All roight?"

"Splendid," answered the detective, enthusiastically. "It will take a good deal of racing to beat her to-day, if I git a squar' show."

"Phwell, thot's what yez are goin' ter git, sure, my b'ye," said Pat, clenching his fist as his gaze met the glance of Mathew Slater, who had just come out of Badger's stable.

A bell rang, and the jockeys who were to ride in this race took off their outer coats and appeared in the colors of their stables. Ben wore a scarlet jacket and cap, that contrasted prettily with his buff breeches and top boots, and would be very conspicuous on the course.

"Thot's a purty dress, Bin. It's the colors of Miss Ruth, eh?"

"Yes. She chose them herself, and all her horses that have been run have been recognized by the people, and they have a pretty good name, although, of course,

no one supposes that it is a young girl that is running all these horses—that is, no one outside the few that are posted."

With his saddle in his arms, Ben ran to the weighing room, and then came out to the saddling paddock. As he did so, some one jostled against him, and he noticed a peculiar odor in his vicinity that he did not recognize.

He looked around, and there was Jim Rodney, dressed for the race, in the Simon Stroker colors, of dark blue and white, in stripes, and looking smaller than ever in his jockey rig.

Another bell, and the jockeys were hoisted into their saddles, making a brave show, as they cantered slowly down toward the judge's stand.

There were ten altogether, and as the cloths were removed from them it was hard for a stranger to tell which horse looked better than his neighbor. Race-horses resemble each other a good deal when they are all furbished up for a race and although an expert could see that the fine breeding of Fury and the immense strength of Badger made them the most promising of the lot, one who did not know much about horses could hardly have said that they had any better chance than the worst scrub in the field, thrown in as a sort of fill-up, or for some private reason of an owner who never expected to win the race.

Stroker and Slater were in earnest conversation with Rodney, as he sat on Badger's back looking down at them. They were giving him their last directions as to how he was to run, and it was easy to see from the strained look in Richard Stroker's eyes that the result of the few minutes' run around this track, that was only fun to many there, would mean ruin or prosperity to him.

"See here, Rod," Stroker was saying, "don't force him too much at first, but at the same time don't drop too far behind. Remember to keep something in him for the homestretch, because that is where we have the advantage with Badger. He has great staying powers, and I only wish the course was two miles, instead of one. None of the others would have any chance then."

"Why don't thee have the course made two miles, then, friend Simon?" put in Mathew. "Thee has a great deal to say in the matter with the directors of the association."

"Don't be a fool, Mathew," growled Stroker.

"No, don't be a blamed fool, if you kin helpit," squeaked a voice just behind them, as Snap kept carefully out of sight, but listened to the conversation, nevertheless.

Nobody heard Snap's muttered remark, and he grinned as he thought how nicely he was learning all about the enemy's tactics. It was not an honorable thing to do, of course, but Snap was bound to give all the odds in favor of Fury if he could, and he would have picked Simon Stroker's pocket of his watch and purse if he had thought it necessary for Battery Ben's advantage.

"Now, you understand, Rod," resumed Stroker. "Keep Badger well in hand to the half. Then let him out a little, if you think it wise, so as to come in first. At the three-quarters let him go, and come down the homestretch as if the devil were at your heels."

"That all?" asked Rodney, in a matter-of-fact way, as he examined the top of his riding whip.

"Yes, except, of course, to keep your eye on Fury. Remember that it is her race or Badger's, and don't let her get too far away from you, because there is a great burst of speed in that mare, and she has stamina, too. If she holds well ahead to the three-quarters you may have trouble to pass her, or even to throw her off if she happens to be at your girths. Understand?"

Rodney winked an exceedingly knowing wink as he glanced carelessly over to where Pat McGlone and the stableman who had been looking after the mare for the last hour or two with Ben, were standing looking admiringly at the mare and her rider.

"I don't think I shall have much trouble with Fury," observed Rodney, significantly, as he drew the end of his slim riding whip slowly through his lips and seemed to be in a reverie.

Mathew grinned, and, without a word, strolled away toward the bunch of horses that were just behind Fury and Battery Ben.

Fury was in a frisky humor, and was dancing about on her hind legs by this time, as if she was doing her best to displace her rider.

"Hould on, Bin," cried Pat, as he saw Ben sway a little in his saddle. "Yez don't mane to say that ye'd let the mare t'row yez aff, do yez? Hould on, I tell yez."

The mare was jumping about, and, to Pat's horror, Ben did not seem able to control her, nor even to sit in the saddle.

"Howly murther!" muttered Pat. "Shure Oi niver t'ought me b'ye would be so ricketty on a horse's back. He's lost his nerve, shure, an' thot manes thot he'll lose the race, fer those t'ieves of d'e worruld mane to win with thot big, bony baste of a Badger, if it can be done."

It may be remarked here that Pat McGlone had no reason to speak in this way of Badger, who was as fine looking a horse as any one could see in a day's travel.

Rodney chuckled as he saw Ben swinging about in the saddle, as Fury jumped about. Stroker looked at the performance wonderingly, and perhaps with a thrill of hope, as he thought what a good thing it would be if Fury were to refuse to start, and then get entirely beyond her jockey's control. How easy it would be for Badger to win the race then.

Clang!

The gong sounded for the start, and the ten horses lined up as well as they could to run past the starter, and contest for the great Brooklyn Handicap.

With a great effort, Battery Ben brought Fury down to her feet, and got her into line, although she was still unusually restive.

"What's the matter with me?" Ben was muttering to himself. "I cannot see as well as usual, and my head swims. I must be bilious, or else my nerve is giving out. Pshaw! My nerve held up for me in some pretty bad scrapes in Arizony, and it isn't likely to go back on me now. And yet—"

"Look out there," yelled Rodney, at his side, and then he saw that Badger was next to him, and that Rodney was looking at him in a peculiar way.

Ben had hardly time to notice this, when he saw that Rodney's arm moved quickly upward, as if he were throwing something, and at the same instant the peculiar odor he had caught before on his way from the weighing room almost overpowered him, and he could hardly sit in the saddle.

There was a chuckle in his ear, that he knew came from Rodney, although he could not see him, for things grew dark, and before he could recover himself, he found that he was in Pat McGlone's arms, and he heard the shout from the grand stand: "They're off!"

"What is it, Pat?" he murmured, as he tried to understand where he was and what had happened.

All he could comprehend was that the great Brooklyn Handicap had begun, and that, somehow, he and Fury were out of it. Then he heard a great deal of confusion, and Pat McGlone whispered to him:

"Brace up, Ben. It was a false start, an' there's a chance yet. Can't you git inter the saddle ag'in. Faith, if I hadn't caught yez, ye'd hev' drapped roight down undher the heels of that big brute, Badger. Somebody's given yez knockout drops. Thot's phwat it is, or they've t'rown some stuff inter yer face. Oi know phwat it is."

"Yes, yes, I remember," gasped Ben. "It was Rodney. That funny smell. Ah, the coward! But—but—I must—win—the—race. I—I—"

The drug that had been thrown into his face was too much for him, and Pat

McGlone carried him in his arms into the stable with Snap and the stableman leading Fury.

The excitement was intense. Fury was the favorite, and there were hundreds of thousands of dollars wagered on her. The mob became unruly, and the grand stand was a perfect pandemonium. If Rodney had been suspected by the crowd he would hardly have left the track alive. But they didn't know it, and he sat on Badger, perfectly still, with an irrepressible sneer on his face, while Stroker, who was in the judge's stand, as an influential man, wondered what would be the end of it all.

The judges postponed the start for a few minutes, to give Ben a chance to recover, although it was objected to most strenuously by the backers of Badger and the other horses in the ten that might have a fighting chance to win.

"How is he?" asked the starter, leaning forward as Snap came out of the stable and walked toward the stand. But Snap shook his head. He would have liked to be able to say that Battery Ben showed signs of improvement, but he had just seen the detective lying on the floor on some hay, with a white face and closed eyes, and apparently dead to everything.

"It's no use, Mr. Johnson. Let 'em go," said the president of the track from his back. "Don't waste any more time."

"Clang!" went the bell again, and the starter prepared to give the word "Go."

Fury was at the door of her stable, with Pat holding her, and Stroker felt a thrill of joy as he saw that his dangerous rival was out of the field, and he was wondering whether he might not have saved himself a great deal of trouble and crooked work if he had known that the jockey would drop in this way just before the race.

The horses were all in line, ready for the start, and Rodney was holding Badger well in hand, determined to throw away no chances, even now that Fury was out of the race. Sometimes a rank outsider will jump to the front in an unexpected manner, as every racing man knows, and Rodney felt that if he lost this race now, he might as well blow out his brains at once.

The expectation of the crowds in the grand stand was strained to a painful pitch, and every eye was on the starter.

Suddenly there was a commotion in the vicinity of Fury's stable, and a great cheer went up as a light figure, clad in scarlet and buff, leaped into the saddle, and brought Fury sweeping down to the bunch of horses waiting for the start.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BROOKLYN HANDICAP.

"Rah for Ben!" squeaked a shrill voice, as Snap waved his Derby hat and ran toward the horses.

Then he stopped and rubbed his eyes. The light figure in scarlet on Fury's back was not Ben.

It was that of a young fellow, whose delicate features, flushed with excitement, were remarkably handsome, while the brown eyes that flashed beneath the dark lashes, showed determination to win that race or die in the attempt.

"Hully chee! If d'is here ain't d'e greatest fake I ever seen, may I lose all me law knowledge!" he muttered. "Who is d'at mug on d'e horse. I'll have ter ask Pat McGlone, fer if I don't find out soon I'll git consumption with wonder-ing."

He ran over to where Pat McGlone was slowly making his way toward the horses, having assisted the strange young fellow to mount in the saddle.

"Pat, who is that?" he asked, breathlessly.

"Indade, now, an' Oi'll niver tell ye," answered Pat, but with a twinkle in his eye that told Snap that he could have told, if he would.

"There ain't no time ter find out now, but I'm bound to get to d'e bottom of d'is thing," was Snap's comment, as he jumped into the grand stand and made

his way to Mrs. Ward and Miss Van Corten, to see the race.

"How's me b'ye?" asked Mrs. Ward, anxiously, for she could not get out of the grand stand, and she was worried terribly over the failure of Battery Ben to ride. Even when she saw that another jockey had been found to ride the mare, she was not so very much interested, much as she loved Ruth Slater, and wanted her horse to win.

"He's all roight, Mrs. Ward," answered Pat, cheerfully. "Some of those blay-guards gave him something ez knocked him out, but he'll be well in a few minutes, although he can't roide, bad cess to him ez worrucked ag'in him."

With this assurance Mrs. Ward was measurably content, because she knew that she could depend upon Pat McGlone telling her the truth, and at that moment a shout went up and the horses were off.

The horses had all got away in a bunch, and it was declared by everybody to be a clean and pretty start.

Mrs. Ward leveled her powerful field-glass at the figure in scarlet that was riding so carefully on the mare Fury, holding her down to a good, swinging stride, and watching for every point of advantage in getting to the front, when suddenly she dropped the glass into her lap and turned almost white with astonishment.

"Pat!"

"Phwell?"

"Do yez know who it ez is roidin' Fury?"

"Oi do thot," answered Pat.

"And yez never tould me."

"Phy should Oi? Ye found it out ye'r-self."

"Indade, an' thot's thure, too. But, just to t'ink of it."

"Ah, it's great, isn't it?"

"What are you talking about?" asked Miss Van Corten, who was sitting in a quiet, ladylike manner, according to custom, watching the race in a careless way, without using any glasses to aid her vision except her ordinary glasses.

"The—the-jockey!" gasped Mrs. Ward.

"Well, who is it?"

"It's—it's—Miss Ruth!"

"Wh—a—a—a—t!"

Miss Van Corten was startled out of her ordinary calm, cold demeanor, for once, and, as she jumped out of her chair, and sat down again, everybody in the vicinity looked at her in surprise.

But the race was well on now, and the people in the grand stand who were so much surprised to find Ruth Slater in that costume, riding her own mare in a great race, felt that they must watch the contest that was fraught with so much importance to the actors in this drama.

As said before, the horses got away in a bunch, with one of the outsiders leading. He was acting as pacemaker for another outsider, whose owner thought it just possible that he might be second or third, if not first, and was backing him for a place.

Ruth, with her pretty mouth tightly closed, was next to Badger, who was sweeping along in a grand way, with Rodney holding him in with a grasp of iron. As for the mare Fury, she was going lightly, and, under the soothing hand of Ruth, was apparently good for ten miles at the gait she was going, if it had been necessary.

Ruth and the mare knew each other, and there was only one other person in the world who could have handled the mare so satisfactorily. That person was the detective, who was lying in the stable, gradually coming to himself and wondering how the race was going.

Fury's sensitive mouth obeyed the least hint from her rider, and when the quarter-mile flag had been passed, Ruth gave Fury a hint to go just a little faster. She and Badger were running neck and neck, and Rodney, with his eyes well shaded by the long peak of his blue-and-white cap, was looking straight between his horse's ears, apparently unconscious of everything around him.

But he wasn't. As soon as Fury drew ahead a little, a touch of Badger's ribs with the inside of Rodney's legs was re-

sponded to by a spurt on the part of the horse, and Badger was level with Fury again.

"Bli' me, I'll tease 'er so as she won't know where she is afore this race is over," muttered Rodney, behind his little mustache, as he champed tighter on the piece of straw that he carried in his mouth, as a matter of course.

Ruth kept her teeth clinched, as she recognized these tactics of Badger, and she again gave the mare a warning, and this time shot her ahead a full length of Badger, keeping the advantage as she passed the half.

Now the race began in earnest. Half the course was covered, and the field right on the quarters of the two favorites, with one handsome bay horse, Victor, struggling hard for third place. It was apparent that the race must be among these three.

Badger came thundering on, and was soon level with Fury, and even a little in advance of her, while Victor's rider, giving him a touch, brought him, with a great effort, to a level with the other two, and the three horses were running neck and neck at a good smart pace.

It was the best that Victor could do, and it was well for him that he had left the field so far behind him, for he was evidently using all the steam he had, and if the pace were to be kept up for long, his name of Victor would hardly fit him.

The shouts from the grand stand came echoing across the open space from the far side of the track, but the riders of the horses took little notice of them. They had serious work just now, and there was no time to bow acknowledgment to applause.

"Wonder if that there mare has much left in 'er," muttered Rodney. "Bli' me, if she ain't a goin' good. I'm afraid Badger hasn't quite so much stamina as Stroker thought, but I'll keep him up to it, somehow. Hello, bli' me, if the mare ain't a goin' away from us! Hello! This won't do! There goes Fury!"

In fact, Ruth had been carefully nursing her mare's powers, and had gently passed a little ahead of the big horse at her side. Rodney touched his horse with the spur for the first time, and he leaped like a staghound to the front, leading the mare by a neck, and apparently determined to keep the advantage he had gained.

Stroker saw this move from the other side, and he yelled wildly:

"Hold him in, Rodney! Not yet! Not yet! Cuss' yer! Not yet!"

The horse was showing some signs of distress, Stroker thought, for he could see that there was foam on his neck, and he thought that Rodney was taking the strength out of him too soon.

But Rodney knew what he was doing, and he could feel that Badger would carry him to the end of the track easily enough and have something to spare. The only question was whether he would take him to the winning post quickly enough.

Ruth had not used the spur yet, and she did not intend to do so until the time came for the supreme effort. She knew that Badger was a little ahead of her, but she felt that she could easily take that advantage from him when she was ready, and she was riding a steady, intelligent race. She would not let Badger increase his lead, much as Rodney would have liked to do it, if he could have done it with safety. But he knew that if he increased his pace it would be drawing on the powers that he must save for the final burst, and he was too good a jockey to override his horse at that stage of the contest.

The three-quarters!

Now the blood that rushed like a fiery torrent through the veins of the Kentucky thoroughbreds, with the strain of Araby that gave it the strength, the fire, the nerve that distinguish them from ordinary horses, began to tell!

The crowds in the grand stand yelled in the excitement of those last few glorious moments as crowds seldom yelled before,

and every rider on the track, even those so far back as to be out of the race, drew themselves together for the final effort.

Down the homestretch!

Fury and Badger were side by side, and now whip and spur were plied again and again by Rodney, while Ruth, with her light whip occasionally laid across the flanks of her black mare, was content to save the spur until it was absolutely needed, which was not just yet.

A leap forward, and Badger was again half a neck ahead.

Another leap by Fury, and they were level!

First one, then the other, the two horses came into the close view of the grand stand. Half a dozen more long strides, it seemed, and the race would be over.

Which was the winner? Even now, under the very eye of the judges in their box, no one could tell!

"Fury! Fury! Be jabbers! the mare hez it!" yelled Pat McGlone, and the cry of "Fury!" was taken up by hundreds, only to be drowned by shouts of "Badger! Badger!" "A hundred to one on Badger!"

Rodney's breath was coming quickly in short gasps, and Ruth, with her tightly-shut lips, and her teeth clinched behind them, prepared to make the last effort.

The two horses were side by side, their noses so close that they could almost touch each other, when Ruth used her last card held in reserve—the spur!

As the beautiful mare felt the slight prick of the steel, she seemed to go forward as if struck by lightning!

Four strides! Badger and Fury were level! Three strides, and Fury had pushed her nose just a little ahead! Two strides, and she had increased her lead!

"'Rah! Fury! Fury! Fury! Good for the mare! Fury!"

The name of Fury surged up from the crowds in the grand stand, and cattered along the railing, and was taken up outside the track grounds and whirled into the surrounding neighborhood, while the telegraph operators had already clicked the news to New York, where it was even now being put into type, to be proclaimed on Broadway and Park Row in a few minutes.

One more stride, which did not much matter, for Fury had won the race.

But, as that last stride was taken, Rodney leaned forward in his saddle, something gleamed in his hand, and the saddle-girths on Fury were flying in the wind. He had cut the girths clear through in the vain hope of turning the tide of victory at its very crest!

As the horses swept past and the numbers ran up, to proclaim Fury's triumph, the saddle slipped right around, and Ruth fell almost under the very hoofs of the third horse, Victor, who was coming along at a tremendous pace.

Amid the yells of satisfaction and disappointment, Pat McGlone sprang almost headlong down the grand stand, and over upon the track, and picked up the insensible form of the girl just the field came sweeping down upon them.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WHAT MATHEW SAW IN THE STABLE.

Where was Mathew Slater during the race? He had not appeared on the course, or in the judges' stand, where he could have gone, with Simon Stroker, and he had not been seen on the grand stand, or anywhere else about the track since he had whispered to Jim Rodney just before Battery Ben had fallen from the mare helplessly and fainting.

Let us look into the stable where Badger had spent a few hours, but from which he had been removed now to take his part in the Brooklyn Handicap.

The Fifth Avenue Sport had seen that the horse was under the eye of Simon Stroker, and he felt that he had done all that he could do to facilitate his success. If the horse did not win now, he could not help it, and he had other things to look after.

About the time that Ruth Slater had suddenly appeared to take the place of Ben as the jockey of Fury, Slater was sitting in the stable, on an inverted pail, listening intently to the explanation of Sam Slyme, who was telling him an interesting story, apparently.

Slyme did not look like a 'longshoreman now. Instead, he was dressed in the extreme of sporting fashion. He wore a long gray duster, that was unbuttoned, to show his fancy vest, on which a heavy gold chain hung, his white shirt front, with a small diamond in it, and trousers of a light shade, carefully creased. On his head was a shiny silk hat, and in his hand he carried a heavy, silver-mounted cane. Altogether, no one would have recognized the rough fellow who was turned out of Mrs. Ward's restaurant on the Bowery, or who ran away with the mare Fury, and was caught so neatly on the ferryboat just as he was leaving Brooklyn for New York.

Sam Slyme had evidently struck luck, and his conversation with Mathew Slater showed what it was.

"Well, Mr. Slater, it's no use talking to me about it. The girl got away. She was carefully kept in that house in Philadelphia, and I guess the doctor really believed that she was slightly insane, because he was a respectable old guy, as you know, and he would not have allowed her to be kept there if he had thought there wasn't anything the matter with her."

"Get down to facts," interrupted Slater, impatiently. "When you begin to talk it seems as if you couldn't stop."

Slyme laughed as he answered:

"That's all right, governor. If I was to talk all I know, it might be bad for some people."

"And for some other people," put in Slater, quickly, as he darted a sinister glance at Slyme that made that gentleman wince, in spite of his fine clothes and his general air of prosperity.

"That's all right, governor," he responded, with an uneasy smile. "If you and I were to peach on each other, I guess it would be the electric chair for both of us, unless your political pull helped you, and I don't think it would."

"Get down to business and tell me your story, so that I can see what to do. Where did the girl go? Do you know?"

"Of course, she came to New York, and I suppose you will find her at home, when you go there, and I don't envy you the time you'll have with her, for I fancy she knows all about you and your tricks, now. You see, the doctor was a good, easy man, and when she behaved rationally, after she got over her excitement at being taken to the private asylum, the doctor allowed her to go out with a good strong nurse, a woman who had been with him a long time, and who he knew would not allow her to get away. Well, that was all right. The girl and the nurse went out a good many times, till it got to be a regular thing, and Miss Ruth never tried to get away."

"Yes, yes. Go on!"

"So of course the nurse got a little careless, and Miss Ruth was watching for her opportunity. Yesterday morning they were out together. I saw them myself, on Chestnut Street, looking in the store windows. Miss Ruth had a fancy to go into a dry-goods store—one of those large places—and in she went, with the nurse right by her side. Well, you know it is easy to lose any one in a dry-goods store. I guess that nurse is looking for the girl yet. I went to the doctor's last night, to ask him how Miss Ruth was, according to your instructions, and found that she had got away."

"Where do you suppose she is—over in New York?"

"I guess so," answered Slyme, carelessly. "Do you want me any longer? The police are making a lot of awkward inquiries about that murder of old Lenz, I heard to-day. Strange that they can't let an unpleasant thing like that drop, isn't it?" asked Slyme, with a grin, as he unlocked the stable door.

Slater glared at him, but Slyme continued to smile as he strolled out into the sun-

light, with his new clothes, of which he was evidently extremely proud.

"Hello, Mr. Slater, the race is going on," he exclaimed, as he ran toward the grand stand to get a good view of it.

"Curse the race!" muttered Slater, resuming his seat on the stable pail, and dropping his chin into his hands in deep thought.

Somehow the stable seemed to grow darker, as he sat there, and the shouting of the people over in the grand stand and around the railings of the track came to him muffled, as if in a dream. He was shut out completely from the world, and found himself alone with his terrible thoughts. For they were terrible, and embraced more things than were suspected by those who knew him.

At last he stirred himself with a shiver, and prepared to go out again. He was so confident that Badger had won the race that he did not care anything about the particulars. It was sufficient for him that his schemes had worked, and that the money he needed to make up the \$100,000 in the hands of the safe deposit company could be raised at once. That would make him safe, in case the will was found, or if Ruth should make an unpleasant statement in court, and, besides, it would give him some money for his immediate necessities.

"I should like to know whether that will is really lost. What a fool I was not to destroy it myself. Now, all I know is on the word of that fellow Slyme, who is a precious rascal, and who bleeds me for money just as he pleases. Pshaw! Why don't I give him up to the police? It would insure his being sent up the river for a term of years—perhaps twenty or so. Ah, but then he might tell what he knows about me, either in court or at the penitentiary. Yes, they will listen to convicts' confessions. No, it will not do. He might say too much about Emil Lenz."

The sport walked up and down the dark stable three or four times, and then dropped to his uncomfortable seat on the stable pail again, as if he could not contain himself, as he resumed his meditations:

"That old fool Lenz, who has got me into so much trouble! Why did he die so easily? And why couldn't he keep that cursed will out of sight? Everything that has gone wrong with me is chargeable to him! And they say I killed him! Rubbish! Why should they think that I had anything to do with the murder in that office, when I proved that I was not there by coming up by the elevator after they had found the—the—body? Why, it is ridiculous! It is—"

A shriek burst from the lips of Mathew as he reached this stage of his musings, and he fell, a groveling heap, upon the dirty stable floor.

The awful yellow light was in the stable in the corner where all had been darkness a moment before.

It cast a glare through the gloom, and yet did not seem to light up the stable. It only made itself felt, without appearing to answer any useful purpose. At least, so it seemed to Mathew Slater.

Mathew Slater dared not look up. He knew the light was there, and he could only wait in the hope that some one would come to his relief before he lost his reason. Then he remembered, with a sinking of the heart, that he had himself locked the stable door, and that no one could get to him until he unlocked the door.

Ah! What was that? Surely his niece's voice—that niece who had escaped from the private asylum in Philadelphia! Was she here to confront him with his crimes and bring the officers of the law down upon him? What should he do?

Slowly he raised his head from the shelter of his arms on the stable floor, and dropped it hastily as he saw that the yellow glare was still there.

"I did not do it!" he shrieked, in agony.

"Liar!" answered a voice, that he recognized as that of the dead man, Emil Lenz.

Whether Slater actually lost consciousness then, he could never tell, but he thought he did.

The next thing he remembered was his trying to raise his head, and finding that

he could not do it, as a cold hand, with one finger protruding, touched him on the back of his neck, while the awful finger, like the pointer of fate, touched him on the exact spot that the blue mark showed on the neck of the dead Emil Lenz!

"Liar!" repeated the voice of the dead lawyer, and Mathew was as if in a trance!

The cold hand was removed, and Mathew still lay on the floor for hours, as it seemed to him. Then he raised his head and saw that the stable was all dark.

With the disappearance of the yellow light, and the absence of all sounds that might alarm him, the sport gradually recovered his nerve. He took his seat on the pail again, and wiped his damp face.

"Whew!" he muttered. "I'm sick, I am sure, or I would never get such fancies into my head. I see yellow lights, and I hear voices, and I'm not in good condition generally. I will see a doctor. I wonder how the race went. Of course, Badger won, but I should like to know who were second and third. I suppose Victor got a place, but the rest of the bunch were pretty poor material, and I guess it was a stand off among them."

He had half arisen from the stable pail, when he dropped upon it again, in worse condition than ever.

The yellow light was again in the back of the stable, and in the middle of it, as if surrounded by an infernal halo, was the face of Emil Lenz, the murdered lawyer!

CHAPTER XXVII.

EXIT "ROD."

It was a close call for Pat McGlone and Ruth, but the active Irishman, and perhaps good luck, were too much for adverse fate.

Victor was the first of the bunch to come, and he was several lengths ahead of the others. He leaped lightly over the girl, and, swerving as he did so, almost unseated his rider, but got in third, notwithstanding, as he could have done had he dropped to a walk, for that matter. Pat tried to get the girl out of the way, but he was too late! The other horses were upon him, and almost before he knew what had taken place, all the racers ran around the two prostrate figures, save one awkward brute, who tried to stop, caught his foot in the ground in some unexplainable way, and, having shot his jockey over his head several yards away, incontinently rolled over himself, and lay, with his heels in the air, waiting for some one to pick him up.

"Look out, ye brute! The jockey couldn't hov' much sinse ter let yez toomble over, so he couldn't."

Which was rather hard on the jockey, who had been pitched on his head, and who was just getting up, dusty, torn, and demoralized.

Carefully Pat McGlone picked up the young girl, and carried her to Fury's stable, while Snap, who, for once, had nothing to say, led Fury there too. But almost before Pat had picked up the girl there was an official of the track at his elbow, to direct him to go to the weighing-room, and there Ruth was taken, saddle and all, to be weighed again, that there might be no question about the right of the mare to be proclaimed the winner of the great Brooklyn Handicap.

Although only a girl, it would take more than a fall from a horse to keep her unconscious for long, as the physician who examined her said, with a smile, as he announced that there were no bones broken. Even as he spoke, Ruth opened her eyes, and gave herself a slight shake, preparatory to walking across the paddock, as brave as any jockey of them all.

As she appeared in view of the grand stand, a great shout went up, for the scarlet colors were recognized at once, and every one wanted to show their appreciation of the "boy" who had ridden so gallantly, and won the race in spite of the unfortunate accident to the saddle.

For no one had seen the trick of Jim Rodney, except Ruth, and she hardly knew what he had done.

Ruth waved her hands to the people,

and then, as she reached the stable of the mare, two stout arms were thrown around her neck, and, to the surprise of every one, Mrs. Ward shouted:

"Och, thin, me darlint girl, an' phwat is it yez hov' done? Shure, Oi t'ought it wuz yeself whin yez first came out into the thrack, so Oi did. Och, it's meself thot's the proud woman this day."

Ruth ran hastily into the stable, with the others at her heels—Mrs. Ward and Pat—and placed her arms about the neck of Fury, who was standing in a corner, drinking water carefully measured out for him by the stableman, while Snap was taking chances by standing dangerously near the heels of the skittish, uncertain-tempered little mare.

Mrs. Ward looked hastily around for her son, because she had not seen him since he had been carried into the stable, although she had been assured that he had recovered entirely from the effects of the drug, and was looking after the interests of Fury in the stable.

There was a small room adjoining the stable that was used as a dressing-room, and Ruth retired to change her dress.

"Now, be the powers, Fury hez shown that she's the best little mare in the country," exclaimed Pat, enthusiastically, "an' it's meself thot is glad, lettin' alone thot Oi've won a toidy pot of money on it. But sure, thot is nothin', after all. It's the way we've got away with thim rascals, Mathew Slater and ould Stroker, thot rej'ices me all over, so it is."

"Oh, put a weight on yer chin," said Snap, in a superior tone. "I should like to know how the race would have been pulled off if I had not been here. Thim mugs would have got away with us as slick as a piece of custard pie if I hadn't jumped in. You bet you can't lose me, Charlie."

What Snap had done, or thought he had done, to win the race, will never be known, for at that moment there was a row outside that attracted general attention.

"Begorra, there's a foight," exclaimed Pat, delightedly, as he threw open the stable door.

As he did so, Rodney fell against the doorpost, and the detective, without his coat and wearing the scarlet jacket that he had not yet removed, appeared, with a flushed face, and his hands up in scientific style.

"Phwat is it, Bin?" demanded Pat.

But Ben did not answer. Rodney had been knocked backward, but he did not lack courage, and, moreover, he prided himself upon being a scientific boxer. So he came forward, cautiously sparring for an opening, while Ben, with his eyes fixed on those of his opponent, was looking either for a chance to make an attack or to defend himself against one.

Rodney was cool now, but the bit of straw was between his teeth, as usual, and there was an ugly light in his eye, that told how glad he would have been to administer a thrashing to the detective.

Suddenly he rushed forward and aimed a blow at the detective's mouth. He did not land his blow, but he got a stinger under the eye instead, from Ben's right, followed by another on the chin with the left, and that, too, without his being able to make a "return."

"Wow!" yelled Pat, in intense enjoyment. "Go for him, Bin. Knock the daylight out of him."

"Give him the upper cut!" shouted Snap, whose ideas of boxing were confined to this peculiar blow, that can be so seldom delivered, but that is terribly effective when it is put in properly.

The combatants took no notice of the remarks of the spectators, but rushed at each other and hammered away with hearty good-will, the honors being about even.

"Hello, what's the fun?"

This question was put by a tall, flashily-dressed individual, whom none of the witnesses of the boxing match recognized in the excitement of the moment, but

who was none other than Sam Slyme, in his new clothes.

Sam watched the contest for a moment with the air of a connoisseur, and then, as Ben gave Rodney a drive that knocked him backward a dozen feet, and was following up his advantage, Sam yelled, at the top of his voice:

"Look out behind there!" pointing to the back of the detective.

The ruse worked, although it was an old one. Ben turned for a second, to see what was the matter, and at the same instant Rodney recovered himself and gave Ben a tremendous bang in the mouth.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Slyme. "Good!"

But he did not rejoice long. Pat McGlone saw the trick, and all his honest nature rebelled at such a dirty proceeding. He threw himself upon Slyme, and in an instant there were two lively fights in progress.

Slyme was big and strong, but Pat had been a professional pugilist, and was a terror when he chose to exercise his talent. In about two minutes a dilapidated-looking individual, with a bleeding nose, two black eyes, and light suit torn and covered with dust, was seen to limp out of the enclosure of the Brooklyn track, just as Rodney begged for mercy and admitted that he was no match for Ben.

The detective turned away from Rodney in disgust, for he felt that he could not talk to him as if he had been an honorable foe, and the thrashing he had given the English groom was only a part payment of the debt he owed to him, and which he determined to pay before long.

Jim Rodney made himself scarce as soon as he got out of the clutches of the detective, and when there was a search for him he was not to be found.

Jim Rodney was a clever rider, spoiled by a naturally dishonest tendency, that he could not control. He became a mere stable helper in places where he was not known, and there was nothing of the smart, trim jockey to be seen in the frowsy, drunken rascal who was kicked about and pointed at as the man who had "gone stale."

But to return to Ruth. She came forth from her dressing-room, in a neat tailor-made suit of dark cloth, just as Ben returned to the stable, after polishing off Jim Rodney.

"How is Fury now?" she asked.

The mare was wrapped up in cloths from her nose to her tail, and the stableman was poking about her, looking after her imaginary wants as carefully as if she had been a capricious woman of fashion.

"Why, my dear Ruth, thee looks well!"

It was the croaking voice of Mathew Slater, and he came into the stable smiling in a way that he meant to be propitiatory, while his fishy eyes were turning this way and that, as if he feared a supernatural foe—as he did, perhaps.

The look of scorn that was flashed upon him from his niece's eyes made him quail, in spite of his assurance, and he wondered what he should say to her. He was relieved of this difficulty by his niece saying something to him.

"Mathew Slater, I want to have a little talk with you this afternoon. When will it be convenient for you to see me?"

Mathew could hardly believe his ears. Much as he had wronged her, he did not bargain for the usually good-tempered girl suddenly becoming so distant and determined.

"My dear Ruth," he began, but a look from her silenced him, and he trailed on: "When do you want to see me?"

"As soon as possible!"

A thought flashed through Slater's mind, and he grinned in an unpleasant fashion, as he said:

"Well, if thee can come to my office in Broadway, at eight o'clock to-night, I shall be at liberty, and can hear what thee has to say. But I think it would be better for thee to go quietly home, and wait for me there, because I see that thee has recovered from thy sickness."

"You blayguard!" yelled Pat McGlone,

as he threw his arm around Mathew's neck, and, with a scientific twist, had him lying on his back in the stable as the Irishman's big knee was forced into his chest.

"Quit that!" commanded Ben, pushing Pat to one side, and looking warningly at him. "That is not the right thing to do, and you know it."

"I beg yer pardon, Bin, but it made me so mad whin Oi heard thot big rascal tellin' the girl thot she wuzn't sick now, whin he knew thot the only thing thot made her sick wuz the way he threatened her, thot Oi felt ez if Oi must knock him down." Then, looking down at Mathew, he added: "Git oop, ye dhirty blay-guard!"

Mathew was boiling with rage, but he dared not say anything, for his niece's gaze was fixed on him, and he read in her clear brown eyes that she knew the worst there was to know about him.

Now there was a bustle outside, and Simon Stroker burst into the stable, purple with rage.

"Where is that fellow?" he yelled, and, seeing Mathew, he fell upon him, and would have brained him with the short hunting crop he always carried had not Pat stepped between them.

"You said you would fix that race, and this is how you have done it. Badger lost the race."

"Lost!" shrieked Mathew, and then, without a word, he dashed out of the stable and ran at full speed out of the gate, with Simon Stroker at his heels.

"Hully chee!" exclaimed Snap. "Them mugs must have 'em, sure!"

Ruth said nothing, but she made up her mind to be at her uncle's office, in that big office building in Broadway, at eight o'clock that night without fail.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"HOULD YER BASE."

The little clock that stood on Mathew Slater's rolltop desk in the big building in Broadway was striking eight as there came a low knock at his door.

Mathew had been sitting at his desk in deep thought for half an hour, and when the tap sounded at his door he started as if he had been detected in some secret crime.

"Any one would think I was a murderer," he muttered, with an uneasy laugh, as he arose to open the door.

His hand was on the dead-latch, and he hesitated. Suppose it should be the form of Emil Lenz that stood at the other side of that door, and suppose he should come forward with that awful denunciation that he had heard so many times of late! Mathew shuddered, and he could hardly bring himself to open the door.

"Well, Mathew Slater," said his niece, as he threw open the door with a great effort, and beheld the girl.

Evidently Ruth had made up her mind not to call him "Uncle" again.

Mathew pointed silently to a chair and closed the door. Then he went to it again and turned a key in the lock, so that it was doubly fastened. Ruth looked at him disdainfully as he did this.

The girl took a chair close to Mathew and looked him straight in the eye, as she asked:

"Mathew Slater, why did you shut me up in that private asylum, and where is my father's will?"

"The girl is crazy," snarled Mathew, throwing off all pretense of being less of a rascal than he was. "Your father's will, as you call it, was a forgery, and old Lenz knew it at the time he was reading it. If he had not been unfortunate enough to be murdered on that day, he would have told you so himself. His reading it was only a part of the information he intended to give you about your affairs."

The effrontery of the man astonished the girl, notwithstanding that she had a pretty clear idea that he would go to any lengths to carry out his purpose of obtaining possession of her property.

She looked at him for a moment in silence.

Then she repeated her question: "Where is my father's will?"

"There is no will."

"Oh, yes, there is!" suddenly broke in a voice. "I have it."

Mathew started from his chair, and trembled in every limb, as he kept his colorless eyes fixed upon those of his niece, afraid to look behind him.

"Emil Lenz!" he gasped.

"No, not Emil Lenz this time. I wish I was. I might be rich, then."

Samuel Slyme, in the rough clothes of the longshoreman, stepped from a recess behind Mathew's chair, displacing a curtain to do so, and laughed vindictively.

"You rascal! What do you mean by saying there is a will?" demanded Mathew, in fierce tones, although his trembling lip indicated his apprehension of the answer that was coming.

"Don't get too flip, Mathew. I'm desperate, now. My clothes were all torn up by that friend of yours, the detective, and the world seems to have gone back on me, and I don't care whether school keeps or not. You are always threatening me, Mathew Slater, and now you can do what you like. If I suffer, at least you shall, too. That's the situation. What do you think of it?"

Sam Slyme folded his arms and looked defiantly at the other, and it was evident that the hold Mathew had had upon him was loosening.

"What do I think of it? I—"

Mathew seized a long paper knife, in the shape of a dagger, that lay in his desk, and sprang to his feet. As he did so, Slyme held a pistol, cocked, and pointing directly at his forehead.

"Sit down, Mathew!"

Slater dropped into a chair.

"Now, here is the will," said Slyme, reaching rather awkwardly into the outside pocket of his coat with his left hand, while he kept the pistol ready for business in his right.

Ruth started, and became deeply interested in the actions of the unpleasant, dirty-looking figure before her.

Slyme took out a soiled piece of paper, with a rubber band around it, and with considerable dexterity, considering that he had to hold the pistol ready for business in his right hand.

"There's your will, Miss Slater," he said, as he handed the paper to the girl.

Mathew Slater moved quickly, as if he would snatch it from her hand, but the pistol was brought against his forehead with a smart rap that warned him to keep away, and he slunk back in his chair, the picture of disappointed avarice, and the incarnation of despair.

Ruth looked over the paper rapidly, for, as she had already heard it read by the lawyer, she knew pretty well what was in it. Then she looked at Mathew and said:

"You have \$100,000 belonging to me, that is in the Safe Deposit Company's vaults. The house and furniture in Fifth Avenue belong to me, and, in fact, there is no reason for your staying there save as my guest. That \$100,000 I must have, because, of course, it is there, and as for the house and furniture, you may have the use of them as long as you live. I do not wish to turn you out."

"Thank you," sneered Mathew. "How kind of you."

He had sunk into a heap in his chair, looking alternately from the girl to Slyme from beneath his bent brows. Suddenly, with a yell of fury, he flew at Slyme, knocked the pistol from his hand, and forced him to the floor.

Slyme was much bigger than the other, but Slater seemed to have the strength of a giant in his fury, and he seized Slyme by the shoulders, and beat his head again and again upon the floor.

Ruth, taken completely by surprise, could only stand and look upon the struggling men, without being able to interpose, even if she had known how to do it.

"Let go of me, cuss' you, or I'll do you

mischievous!" gasped Slyme, as he tried to turn over, and get some purchase on his foe.

Mathew took his enemy by the throat with his right hand, and, as they rolled over and over, somehow Slyme fell upon his face, with Mathew over him. Then, with a gleam of devilish malice in his eye, Mathew reached under a loose rug that lay in front of his desk and drew forth a long, thin instrument, like a darning needle, fitted into a handle, and, in spite of the writhings and strugglings of Slyme, placed the point upon the back of his neck, and seemed to be carefully selecting the exact place to drive it in.

"Stop!"

With a yell of horror Mathew Slater loosened his grasp of Slyme, and fell over in a swoon, with the instrument clutched tightly in his hand.

The voice was that of Emil Lenz.

Slyme got off the floor and felt his throat, as if to assure himself that it had not been squeezed out of shape by the man who now lay on the floor, opening his eyes as he slowly recovered consciousness.

"Well, Miss Slater, I've done the best I could to make up for the harm I've done, and now I guess I'll go," said Slyme, making a rough bow to the girl. "You have your father's will, and I don't think the police will have far to go to find the man that murdered Emil Lenz. There is more mystery about the whole thing than I can explain, but I think it will soon be explained. Good-night."

He pushed Slater over in an unceremonious way, and took the key of the door from his pocket in a matter-of-fact way. Then he unlocked the door and threw it wide open.

As he did so Mrs. Ward appeared, and, without ceremony, planted a blow on Slyme's chest that sent him sprawling on top of Slater, who had recovered enough to sit up.

"That's one Oi owe yez," said the good lady. "If it hadn't been for your blatherin' me b'ye would never have been hurtled, so he would not, an' now he's gone, an' Oi'm worried ter death over him."

Slyme did not answer, but he got to his feet quietly, and, picking up his pistol, that—perhaps, fortunately for Slyme—Mathew had not seen, the 'longshoreman rushed out of the doorway, and down the stairs, as if the arch-fiend himself were at his heels.

"The blayguard! Let him go! Faith, Oi'll git him if I want him," laughed Mrs. Ward, who had recovered her good humor, and who now looked curiously at Mathew Slater, as he slowly lifted himself into his office chair.

Mathew had been fumbling about at the side of his desk, and now, without warning, the light went out, and the door closed with a bang.

"Phwat's this he's doing?" exclaimed Mrs. Ward, as she held tightly to Ruth's hand. "Faith, Oi t'ink the devil must be in this place, wi'd it's trap doors in the callin', an' the people thot's always goin' in and comin' out. Let's go, Miss Ruth. Yez hov' everyt'ing yez want, an' there's no call ter stay here any longer."

She found her way to the door, but it was shut and tightly locked.

"Begorra, Miss Ruth, they've been playin' some dirty thricks on us again," she exclaimed. "Phwat does it mane?"

There was no answer.

"Miss Ruth!"

No answer.

"Miss Ruth, phwy don't yez spake to me? Howly saints! This place frightens me, so it does. Miss Ruth!"

She groped about the room till she felt that she had been in every part of it, and then she found Mathew Slater's chair and dropped into it, thoroughly frightened.

It was only for a moment that Mrs. Ward stayed in the chair, however. Her native shrewdness told her that Slater would do anything to get Ruth out of the way again, for she had no faith in his natural affection, such as he might have

been supposed to feel for his brother's child. The first thing to be done was, if possible, to get a light.

She did not know where the electric switch was, but she supposed it was somewhere near Mathew's desk. She felt around it in the dark, and her hand touched the switch.

Another second, and the incandescent light would have been at full blaze. She had her finger on the button to push it, when a hand grasped her wrist, and another hand was placed tightly over her mouth.

"Howly—" she spluttered, but the hand over her mouth pinched her nostrils too, and she could not finish the sentence because she had no breath.

Mrs. Ward was an unusually strong woman, and she began to struggle with her unseen foe so desperately that she would soon have turned the tables on him, had not a voice that she recognized with a thrill of joy as well as surprise whispered in her ear:

"Say nothing. Hould ye'r base."

Then the fingers released her nostrils, and the hand was gradually withdrawn from her mouth.

She whispered, "Pat!"

"Sure."

"Phwat are we goin' ter do?"

"Phwait, an' Oi'll show yez."

Pat McGlone, for of course it was he, drew her gently by the arm through the darkness, and she felt the curtains brushing against her, and knew that she was being taken into the little recess that Slyme had come from, and that seemed to be only a place to hold a stationary washstand. There was something about it she did not understand, for she felt that the washstand was out of the way, and a sudden change in the temperature told her that she was in another room. Moreover, she had that peculiar consciousness of the presence of other human beings that cannot be explained, but that every one knows, even though she could not see any one.

"Don't say a worrud, an' Oi'll show yez something," whispered Pat, and then a shaft of light came out of the darkness, right into Mrs. Ward's eyes, and she found herself in a small room, in darkness, save from the shaft of light that came through a hole in the wall above her head, where a step-ladder offered easy access to it.

"Get up there, Mrs. Ward, darlint," whispered Pat, affectionately, "and maybe yez'll see phwat they are goin' ter do."

But a light step sounded behind her, and the warm-hearted Irishwoman clasped in her arms Ruth Slater, with as much delight as if she had not seen the girl for twenty years, instead of only ten minutes ago.

"Phwat place is this?" asked Mrs. Ward, as she stepped upon the ladder.

"It's all right. Don't yez be afeared! Thot Mathew, the scalawag, thought no one knew it but himself, but, begorra, he couldn't get away with Pat McGlone. Phwen I wuz on the fooree it wuz me duty to know all these places thot hov' a 'badger' room, an' Oi knew uv this one ez soon ez it wuz made! There's lots uv these respectable Broadway office buildings phwere all kinds of quare thricks are played. Moind phwat Oi say!"

"Howly saints! Here's Simon Stroker in here wi'd Slater! How did he git there?"

"Say nothin'! Hould ye'r base!"

CHAPTER XXX.

THE GHOST OF EMIL LENZ.

When Mrs. Ward looked through the peephole from the secret closet that the Quaker Sport supposed was not generally known, she saw Simon Stroker holding Mathew Slater by the coat-collar and threatening to choke the life out of him.

"You've ruined me with that cursed horse, and now you've got to get me out of this hole, or you shall never leave this room alive!" Stroker was saying, and he evidently meant what he said.

"What can I do?" cried the other.

"What can you do? Why, you must let

the world know that Ruth Slater is my wife!"

"I wish Ruth were here now," averred Mathew.

"She is here!"

The words came like an outbreak, as the door from the closet was flung open, and one of the curtains that hid the secret door was pulled down by the impetuous entrance of the young girl.

"My dear Ruth!" exclaimed Stroker, as he arose from his chair, and held out his hand.

For answer he got a slap on the cheek that stung for an hour afterward, as Ruth faced them, and it seemed as if her glance would pierce them through and through.

"I have friends close at hand, and I shall have both you and this man arrested at once," she declared, as she turned half-way toward the recess in which the "badger" door was secreted.

"Well, Ruth, I am afraid they will stay there. You must have thought me very foolish not to know that you and your two friends were in that place. I wanted to bring you out, to meet your future husband, but I did not care to use force."

"Rascal!"

Ruth Slater was not the girl to choose her language when very much excited, and she had been worked to such a pitch that she could hardly control herself. She felt that she was surrounded by pitfalls, and that it would indeed be difficult, if not impossible, to escape them.

"You see, my dear Ruth, that forged will that you have in your hand won't help you at all."

Ruth had almost unconsciously held the will that had been given to her by Sam Slyme in her hand, and she started at this matter-of-fact way of disposing of it.

"Forged?"

"Yes, forged! Why, even that big Irishman of yours, Pat McGlone, must confess that he saw what was supposed to be the real will blown overboard from a ferryboat. So that, if there really was any such will, which I doubt, it was lost that day, and this piece of paper cannot be anything more than a clumsy forgery!"

He leaned back in his chair with affected carelessness, for, except when he was overcome by fears of supernatural intervention, Mathew could be brave enough.

"I don't believe you," said the girl, with a curl of her lip.

"You will have to believe me at last," answered Mathew, carelessly. "Why, who could contradict me?"

"I could!"

With a shriek that sounded weird and unhumanlike, Mathew sank into his chair, with his eyes fixed on the half-open door, that gave a narrow view of the dark hall.

In that narrow space, with a dark background, but with the light of the room in which Mathew sat full upon the ghastly white face, was a man, and that man was Emil Lenz!

There could be no doubt about it! All three in the room were looking straight at the awful object—a man, and yet not a man! A being in the flesh and yet not of the flesh!

Look! The stiff jaws are opening, and a hollow voice, that is still that of the dead man, Emil Lenz, comes forth:

"I can contradict you, Mathew Slater. That will in the hand of Ruth Slater is the will made by her father, William Slater, ten years ago. Do not further imperil your soul, murderer, by adding perjury to your crime!"

Ruth looked down at the will in her hand, and the gaze of Simon Stroker followed hers, while Slater, whose eyes seemed ready to start from their sockets, turned away, anywhere, so that he would not see that white, accusing face in the doorway.

"Murderer!" How the charge startled him!

When they looked up again, the thing had gone.

Mathew Slater wiped his forehead, and the other two stood still, trying to understand what they had seen.

"Im-im-im-agin-a-a-tion!" faltered the Quaker.

"No, not imagination!" asserted Stroker, his white lips almost refusing to utter the words. "I believe that is old Emil Lenz's ghost, and that you—you—are his murderer!"

Stroker's voice had been gradually rising in his excitement, and he fairly shouted the last three words, so that Slater winced under his repetition of the awful charge.

"It's—it's a lie!" he protested, feebly.

"It is the truth!"

"Horror! It was Emil Lenz's voice again!"

"Confess!" continued the voice, although the figure of the old lawyer did not appear. "Confess, and save your soul from utter loss!"

Slater looked from one to the other, helplessly, hopelessly.

"Confess! It is your only hope now!"

The tone was threatening, commanding, and Mathew, fairly overcome, moaned, his face buried in his hands:

"Oh, my God! It is true! I did kill Emil Lenz! But I did not mean to do it! No, I did not mean to do it! It was all an accident! Indeed it was, as I can prove, if—if—"

He fell to the floor, face on the carpet, but quickly got up, as if a new thought had struck him, and retreated, with his hair almost bristling on his head, and trembling as if with terror, as Emil Lenz appeared once more, and walked after him, slowly, into the room!

Simon Stroker and Ruth were both transfixed with horror, when suddenly the ghostly figure emitted a loud "Ha, ha, ha!" and, dashing its gray wig to the floor, and opening its old-fashioned vest, revealed the Race-Course Detective.

Stroker was the first to recover himself, and rushed at Ben Ward as if he would kill him with a blow of his ponderous fist. But the always-alert police special was too quick for him. He jumped nimbly to one side, and as Stroker tried to follow up the attack, he found something tangled around his legs that tripped him and threw him heavily to the floor, while a squeaky voice remonstrated:

"Now, don't get gay! This ain't your deal, by a jugful. I'm in this game, and don't you forget it. I'm an old sport, and this is my day fer havin' fun."

Snap seemed to be everywhere at once, and, try as he would, Simon Stroker could not shake him off.

While the Race-Track Sport was mixed up with Snap on the floor, Mathew saw that the coast was clear, and skurried to the door, where he ran plump into the arms of Pat McGlone!

"Hould on, there! Hould on, Sport Mathew! You b-v' confessed now, an' there's nothin' can git yez away, so there isn't! Ben, the jewelry!"

The detective, with a smile, produced a shiny pair of handcuffs, and the next moment the Quaker Sport, scamp and imposter was a prisoner indeed.

By this time Simon Stroker had shaken off Snap, and rising to his feet, looked scornfully at the detective and Pat McGlone.

"Let me give that white-livered rascal of a Mathew one good whack, and you can hang me afterward if you like," he growled.

"The law will do that. We have all the evidence we want," said Ben Ward, confidently.

"And what about me? Are there any charges against me, or may I go?" asked Stroker, ironically.

"Don't be too funny, now Mither Shroker, or there moight be somethin' ag'in yez," put in Pat. "Oi dun'no whether we couldn't hould yez fer horse-shitalin', onyhow, 'count of what yez did wi'd thot little mare, Fury."

"And your conspiracy with Mathew Slater to make Miss Slater marry a man she despised," added the special. "However, we can find you if we want you. Good-evening!"

Simon Stroker looked around him nonchalantly, then strolled in a dignified way to the door. There, however, all the dignity was taken out of him, for Mrs. Ward met him and gave him a good one-two

with her brawny fists, that sent him spinning down the wide staircase, and Pat McGlone declares that he is falling yet.

It is a bright May morning, and the sun sends a golden ripple over the grass of a meadow on Long Island, and seems to reflect the long, warm waves of the Atlantic on the short turf. There is a high fence around the meadow, and a handsome stable at one end.

A mare, covered up in blankets, is trotting freely about the turf, without rider or trainer to touch or interfere with her, and as she gambols from one end of the meadow to the other, perfectly happy, a group of people stand near the stable watching her.

They are Ruth Slater, Euphemia Van Corten, Snap, Pat McGlone, and the Race-Course Detective. Ben, is speaking. He says:

"It was a funny thing, but it turned out all right. I thought the best way to get Mathew Slater to confess was to frighten him, for such sleek rogues are always cowards at heart. I did the trick effectually. It was hard work for me to get at him, but I did it. You see, I have been a ventriloquist, among other things, and I never heard a sound that I could not imitate. Old Emil Lenz's voice was peculiar, and it was easier to imitate on that account, than if it had been an ordinary voice, without any marked characteristics. The scared scoundrel thought I was a ghost, sure, and yet, if he had not been so frightened, he could easily have caught me when I talked down that trap in his office, and through a chink at the cottage on Coney Island. If his conscience had been clear he would not have been scared a particle."

"Thot's so. There's nothin' loike a cl'ar conscience, is there, Mrs. Ward?" put in Pat, as he gave the widow's arm a sly pinch.

"Quit ye'r foolin', Pat McGlone, and listen to Miss Ruth!"

"I was only going to say that I think we ought to give Fury all the luxuries a horse can enjoy, for the gallant way she won that race for us. I had my heart set on it."

"Indade, thin, Miss Ruth, yez worked for it yerself, fer Oi niver saw a betther ridden race in all my loife. Did you, Ben?"

Detective Ben did not answer, but his silence was more eloquent than words, and the young girl understood him.

It is whispered in society circles that Miss Ruth Slater, the beautiful young heiress, is not to be won by a foreign count or marquis, or even by a member of the New York aristocracy, but by a plain young man of the people, whose nobility consists of that which is an American's proudest boast—an honest name, and a true love for his country—and who is known to many friends and thousands of admirers simply as the Race-Course Detective.

THE END.

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